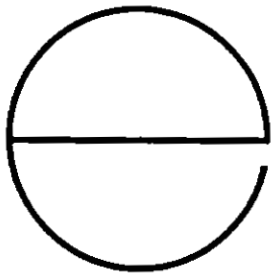

endeavor

(MASKED AND ANONYMOUS)

Screenplay by

Sergei Petrov & Rene Fontaine

Additional Dialogue by

Will Stapleton & J.D. "Emperor" Jones

Based On the Short Story

"Los Vientos Del Destino"

by Enrique Morales

Revised Draft
5/21/02

1 (PRE-TITLE SEQUENCE) 1

FADE IN:

Archival footage(black and white): That iconic image of Jack Fate (Bob Dylan) circa 1965-1966 from over his shoulder, guitar in hand, harmonica around his neck, performing one of his signature songs (eg. 'Blowin in the Wind', 'The Times They Are A Changin') for a massive adoring audience.

FADE OUT:

(TITLES)

2 FADE IN: 2

Open on news footage montage: international, social and political unrest, violence, revolt, protest, natural disasters, and their aftermath. Audio underneath:urgent overlapping news reports in a variety of foreign languages. Music: Various (rock, rap, country, salsa, opera, classical, avant-garde, jazz. We hear talk radio and commercials. Out of the montage, the camera tracks down a street of a homeless encampment. People living in elaborate configurations of boxes and under tarps lined up one after another against a building, landing finally on a vacant homeless man, sitting up against the wall, staring back at us. We move in to his barely held together boom box perched by his side, as out of the cacophony, the voice of a radio preacher emerges from it:

RADIO PREACHER (V.O.)
...Do you not believe in many gods? Or do you not believe in the one true God? Do you believe God created the slave race? Ezekiel saw the wheel? But what kind of wheel? The cigar shaped hubcap things in the sky? Are these the gods that created mankind? Was he imagining that? Let me ask you another question, people, how many people think God and the devil are the same? Amen. People, there are many gods. It is written in the Bible that there are many gods. Does the bible lie? The earth was here long before these gods were...It's written in the Psalms, King David, "Ye are gods." God did not create this earth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

RADIO PREACHER (cont'd)
The earth was here long before these Gods were. It was God created the people...Would you swear on a Bible? I'd swear on a Bible. What happens when you go to court? You swear on the bible. A book of treachery, murder and genocide. Of course I'd swear on that. Put it down right now. They ask God to sacrifice his son. Sacrifice? It's completely absurd, and I'll tell you why. The Christians are relinquishing nine-tenths of the world to the devil... The false Christianity that you subscribe to is nothing more than the cult of the virgin... People, it's time to evaluate and reflect on your lives. Think about it. What did Martin Luther King get out of the whole thing? A boulevard?...

FADE OUT.

3 EXT. OFFICE BLDG.-DAY 3

In one continuous POV shot, we see a once regal office building in a changing neighborhood, in an indeterminate multi-ethnic city in an unnamed country, poised between affluence and abject poverty. We see beautifully wrought architecture gone to seed, done over poorly, modernized haphazardly. Closed storefronts, throngs of homeless and those one step above homeless wandering the streets.

We move into the lobby of this office building and see the once grand ornate interior left to deteriorate.

We move to the directory. It is filled with bogus, dubious foreign sounding businesses, interspersed between obviously carelessly misspelled names and large blank spaces representing widespread vacancies in the building. Amongst the names we see:

Uncle Sweetheart Management - 4th Floor

We move into the elevator. The door closes. We

CUT TO:

4 INT. UNCLE SWEETHEART'S OFFICE - DAY 4

In one continuous move, we pan across photos displayed on his wall. They are 'head-shots' of dubious 'talent' of various disciplines. (We will meet some of them later.) 8x10 composites, signed by the talent to Uncle Sweetheart. Actors, magicians, animal acts, etc. The first two photos seem typical and good, although clearly old, yellowed, dog-eared. As we move, however, the "picture" changes. One frame is broken. The next picture is unceremoniously ripped. Teeth are blackened out and mustaches and glasses are drawn on a couple. Eyes are cut out of another. Then, a few missing altogether, faded rectangles on the wall where they once were. Then, a violent looking hole in the wall. The camera continues moving, first, hearing Uncle Sweetheart on the phone over the photos, then, finally landing on his desiccated countenance itself. UNCLE SWEETHEART is a hard drinking, hard living hard ass combination of John the Baptist and P.T. Barnum, who has blurred the line, even for himself, between salesman and evangelist. He is at once desperate and fatalistic with an abundance of charm and balls. He wears a well worn powder blue tuxedo, a ruffled white shirt and kick ass, ass kicked boots. He is wearing a shoulder holster. We see him put on his jacket over the holster. He takes his pistol, puts one bullet in the chamber, and places it in the holster, concealed by his jacket. Uncle Sweetheart is on the phone. At once, orating, berating, seducing, cajoling, goofing, and challenging.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
(on the phone)
...Honey, you don't have to scream at me. I hear you fine at normal decibel levels. I got a volume control on this phone...Honey, this here's a benefit concert. Benefit...That's right. Bigger than Live-Aid, or Farm-Aid or whatever...if you don't want a piece of this action, then you ain't human...I'm not making a dime on the deal, I'm just trying to feed some starving children, is all. You can't get behind that, you can live with yourself, god bless ya, although I doubt he will...Who takes care of the sick? We're not committing ourselves to any formal point of view.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: 4

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
The more you know the more you suffer...Strong words alone don't influence the Senate. It takes daring and outrageous acts...Oh, how post-modern of you. Thinking is getting in the way of your life. No gambler ever won anything by thinking...

He hangs up and begins rummaging through his cluttered desktop and overstuffed briefcase.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
(singing)
I put a spell on you, 'cause you're mine...

Finally, he finds what he's looking for, a scrap of paper just as the song climaxes. He is very satisfied with his performance.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Ha! I know where everything is...

Angle on scrap: The name "Jack Fate" is scribbled on it, along with a phone number. He hurriedly shoves it in his pocket as he hears movement outside his door. He quickly takes his seat and tries to act nonchalant. We see the shadow of two men, PERCY and BLUNT, loom in his office door window. Then, suddenly, they enter. They are serious men with an agenda.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Oh, it's the dark princes, the democratic republicans. Working for a barbarian who can scarcely spell his own name. Hey, the only thing more pleasant than seeing you would be seeing the grim reaper himself. You gentlemen are about to make a hideous choice. You two are pitiable figures weeping with blood, and it's gonna be your blood. Are you aware gentlemen, that this is all a play?

They wait until he's finished. But they are not really listening. More importantly, they care little for what he has to say.

PERCY
We don't want paper money. We want gold and silver.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (2) 4

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Dark glasses, huh? Usually I like to see the eyes of who I'm dealing with. Okay listen, Uncle Sweetheart is organizing a benefit concert. A benefit concert. To help the children. The real victims of the revolution! However, I will be personally siphoning the majority of the funds into the kitty of the fattest cat of all. Me! And you gentlemen will be paid in full.

PERCY
When?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Definitely in this lifetime.

BLUNT
You got the money, or not?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I understand you're not accustomed to staring into the face of God.

PERCY
Shut up.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I can't. As long as I keep talking, I know I'm still alive.

The two men grab Uncle Sweetheart.

PERCY
There's no use talking to you.

BLUNT
There's no point listening, either.

And with that, the two men proceed to beat the crap out of Uncle Sweetheart. They throw him to the ground and kick and punch him unmercilessly as he lies unseen but not unheard behind his massive desk. As they continue to pummel him, we pan to the pictures, on the wall, which vibrate with each blow, until one of them falls and breaks on the floor. Finally, arbitrarily, the two men seem satisfied.

(CONTINUED)

4 CONTINUED: (3) 4

PERCY
Are you still alive?

There is a beat, then:

UNCLE SWEETHEART
(weakly)
Yup.

Percy and Blunt exit as we

CUT TO:

5 EXT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 5

It's an imposing building that has seen better days, a place where a secret broadcast could take place. An old TV or radio station, or perhaps temple, or other house of worship. Seemingly abandoned or close to it. Perhaps it seems like one thing from the street, but once inside, is something quite different.

6 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 6

We follow NINA VERONICA, the hard charging, cynical, yet secretly optimistic executive supervising the project as she moves through the soundstage, followed by two weasly,officious men, DION and BACCHUS. Past banners heralding the upcoming benefit concert, sets being built, cables laid, a makeshift stage being constructed and art directed. Past a makeshift tent city on the soundstage, a refugee camp, bazaar, the soundstage, not only the location of this concert, but a sort of self contained post modern village, like one might see in the Middle East , Africa, or a Grateful Dead concert. Nina is stuck between the rock and the hard place, and knows that she always will be. Her very appearance, hard, sexual, yet intimidating and untouchable, belies the inner ambivalence she is loath to reveal.

NINA
...Remind Lucius that it's a benefit. We're trying to raise money for medical aid for the families of those dispossessed by the war...

DION
What war?

6 CONTINUED: 6

Nina, clearly has no respect for these two men. And they are in no position to defy or confront her. This is her domain.

NINA
What war? Are you kidding me? All the wars. The futility of war. I'm not going to debate semantics with you. It's real. It's beyond phenomena. There's shooting and killing. How do you define a war, in this day and age?

DION
What are they fighting about?

NINA
I don't know what they're fighting about. Do the Hindus, Jews, Arabs, Irish, Muslims, Buddhists, know what they are fighting about? The last thing anybody knows is what they're fighting about. It's a battle between this world and the next world. One God against another. Religious/ Economic wars caused by pride, ethnic pride. Nobody knows that anymore. The last person who actually knew that was killed years ago. They're all religious wars. Look, we've got dead aliens stacked up in warehouses. What else do you need to know? We're talking about a war with no technological spin-off. Where the fighting is over a small piece of mud, the gateway of the afterlife. The burial site of Arthur and Guinevere. It's an uneasy puzzle to solve, gentlemen.

BACCHUS
So, why a benefit concert?

NINA
Well, how else do you get rock stars to do television? Either give 'em a cause or give 'em an award...

She stops and stares down Dion and Bacchus. She is clearly done with them.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED: (2) 6

They get the message and awkwardly exit. She pivots to two CREW GUYS, who have been eyeing her lasciviously.

NINA
Hey, big boy, you getting your eyes full?

They avert their gaze and quickly return to work.

She enters her trailer which serves as both an office and makeshift home, as the phone is ringing. She picks it up as she checks what's left of her paltry excuse for a wardrobe, changing her shirt, smelling her clothes, etc.

NINA (cont'd)
Lucius,why are you hassling me?...I told you! We're already in too deep to make that kind of change on such short notice...It'll work out. It always works out. Even when it doesn't work out, that's a form of working out...Don't threaten me with pulling the plug. This is about intuition. How we look at the world is who we are. We're bound by an honor code here. This is about some weird plague...You think this is about making money? This isn't about making money. Money-craving is a disease...Don't tell me the definition of a man. A man isn't so much what he does as what he's allowed to do...All right. I'll keep it in mind.

Uncle Sweetheart climbs into the trailer without knocking but with great difficulty, showing some of the effects of the beating.

NINA (cont'd)
I gotta go.
(she hangs up)
What happened to you?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
What happened to me? How far back do you want to go?

6 CONTINUED: (3) 6

NINA
Where's my headliner? I just got off the phone with the network. They want something to promote. They need something to promote. They have some questions about your ability to perform services due.

He looks around for something. A drink? She stops him from snooping. He pulls out his bottle of booze.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
And I suppose you told 'em I was a showbiz stud, that you have total mystical knowledge and faith in me and absolutely no questions about my ability to perform services due.

NINA
Yea, something like that. So, who are we getting? Are we getting any important people? You know, headliners, top of the line performers.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Maybe. We'll see. Ya never know.

NINA
Should I believe you?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Of course.

NINA
Are we or are we not screwed?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I'm not. Are you? I don't think you are getting screwed. That's your problem.

He offers her a swig. She pushes past him.

NINA
I can't believe you're going to turn this disaster into a seduction.

Uncle Sweetheart is seized by a thought.

6 CONTINUED: (4) 6

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Is this place bugged?

She begins to exit trailer. At the door:

NINA
Uncle Sweetheart, an entire society is counting on you to raise some money for them. Victims of circumstance. The victims of the world. We're fighting a war here, in case you didn't know.

She exits: He follows her out onto the soundstage floor where the work continues.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
War? Don't tell me about war. I fought in the grand daddy of all wars. The war to end all wars. The one that ripped the heart out of things... Look, honey, I'm on your side.

NINA
My side? Everyone I've ever met I can look in the eye and tell what side he's on, so why don't we stop the spiffy chatter. I'm on my way to a meeting with the network. They have a much greater reach and resonance then even they themselves might suspect.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
For the love of humanity we must limit their power.

NINA
You don't take any of this seriously.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I am taking it seriously. Look at me, being all serious. Here's the thing. I don't think Sting or Springsteen or Billy Joel or McCartney are going to work out. But I have a surprise for you...

6 CONTINUED: (5) 6

He pulls out the crumpled number of Jack Fate, and shows it to Nina. He tries to sell it with a smile. She's not buying. We hear the sounds of distant thunder.

DISSOLVE TO:

7 FLASHBACK #1 - APPROXIMATELY 1941 7

They are edited together, eight millimeter home movies (perhaps coupled with stills, candid shots and official portraits). A MAN and a WOMAN, early in their marriage, although hardly young. He seems 40ish. The woman, slightly younger. They are proper-looking people, officious, even somewhat stiff in front of the camera, the smiles artificial. They wave awkwardly, from the terrace or veranda, or courtyard of what seems like an opulent, palatial estate. (Think of those candid home movies of Hitler and Eva Braun.)

JACK FATE (V.O.)
...They were happy once, although it's hard to imagine now. Everything in their lives was infused with hope and meaning. Every thought, every emotion, still pure. It seems so long ago now...

CUT TO:

8 FLASHBACK #2 - APPROXIMATELY 1946 8

The father, cavorting awkwardly with his five year old son, in front of and quite obviously for the cameras. A photo op. Think JFK and John John. Once again, the technology is probably 8 mm, coupled with a combination of candid and posed stills.

JACK FATE (V.O.)
...Once he was a real father, full of love, compassion and forgiveness. That didn't last too long. After awhile, being a father didn't amount to more than an official title... He had lived a hard life, survived gunfights, duels and warfare. Once he beat his assassins with a cane after they misfired from point blank range.

CUT TO:

9 FLASHBACK #3 - APPROXIMATELY 1952 9

Same combination of technologies and techniques. This time, it's the proud mother and her embarrassed eleven year old son. She tries to show him affection: a hug, a kiss on the head. He reluctantly accepts it. Again, some candid, some posed and planned.

JACK FATE (V.O.)
...My mother tried to love me, but I think she was trying to kill me. I don't think she recognized me as her son. It was like I'd become a symbol of everything that had gone wrong in her life, in her world...I can tell you one thing. She never loved him either. She married him on the rebound. She had so many suitors, they didn't have enough chairs to accommodate them all...

FADE IN:

10 EXT. HOLDING TANK - PRESENT - DAY 10

It is a facility not originally intended to hold prisoners, but now forced to do so. The men, of various ethnic backgrounds and political idealogies. Amongst them, JACK FATE, a troubadour, a poet, an outsider, he's seen better days and worse. A GUARD approaches and addresses Jack.

GUARD
You're getting out Jack, somebody sprung you.

JACK FATE
Must be my lucky day. Who would do that?

GUARD
Some angels must have intervened on your behalf. Maybe a bunch of people put their savings together. Hell, I don't know.

JACK FATE
I ain't felt free in a long time.

10 CONTINUED: 10

GUARD
Keeping people from being free is a big business.

JACK FATE
What's going on out there?

GUARD
I don't know. It's a very complex society that we're living in. Lotta people moving around, movin' the way fear makes them move. Lotta severed limbs and raped women. It's the same old parade. This time though Jack, if you wanna ride in it you better pay a fee.

JACK FATE
I'll keep it in mind.

An inmate who sits nearby approaches Jack.

INMATE #1
Where you going, Jack?

JACK FATE
Roswell.

INMATE #1
Yeah. Used to be it was the devil who'd molest you all night and leave Rosemary's Baby as a calling card. Now, it's the alien. Well, say hello from me to the mysteriously dead.

Jack nods his head and is led out, as the inmate returns to his position.

CUT TO:

11 INT. NETWORK CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY 11

Nina is being chastised by an intimidating executive, LUCIUS, as they sit around a long conference table with other network executives,including Lucius' equally intimidating main flunkies, VALENTINE and NESTOR.

11 CONTINUED: 11

LUCIUS
I don't understand what went on here. Where are the headliners? Where are the big waves? The big names? Where are the superstars?

VALENTINE
What's to understand? There's nothing to understand. They're not here and there not coming.

NESTOR
You mean to tell me, after all this, we wind up with Jack Fate?

VALENTINE
Jack Nobody? Why?

NESTOR
That guy was over before he started.

NINA
Are you finished?

LUCIUS
We're all finished!

NINA
We ultimately did not have the money in the budget to attract a big name.

LUCIUS
You said we did.

NINA
Well, then, I was wrong. I'm sorry.

Lucius rises and approaches Nina menacingly.

LUCIUS
You're sorry? Something's beginning to smell. It's giving off a bad odor. The fumes are choking me. This isn't grade school. You're not apologizing to your teacher for talking out of turn. We can make all kinds of ugly things happen. I can have you killed for the price of a cup of coffee. Everybody in this room would look the other way.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED: (3) 11

LUCIUS
Plug. There is no plug. Show me a plug and I'll pull it. There's no plug. There's no socket. There's no wall.

VALENTINE
If I go down, I'm taking part of the wall with me. Ha, ha, ha.

No one shares his laughter. Chagrined, he tries to change the subject.

VALENTINE (cont'd)
By the way, Jack Fate, he's not a blood relative is he?

LUCIUS
Shut up, Valentine.

VALENTINE
We should get out now. Wash our hands.

Lucius, Valentine and Nestor rise to exit.

LUCIUS
You think you're getting off cheap with Jack Fate. But believe me, the price will be steep.

NINA
We'll look for some cuts in the budget.

LUCIUS
Cuts? You need amputations. If you wanna suffer agony for someone else's happiness, you do it on your own time. Now go away.

They exit, along with the flunkies, leaving Nina alone. She looks around, uncertain as to which way to get out of this place.

CUT TO:

11 CONTINUED: (2) 11

For the first time, Nina is intimidated.

NINA
Lucius, for god's sake, what are you saying?

LUCIUS
Don't talk to me about god. I'm talkin' about god the destroyer, not god the savior.

NINA
Can we stop kidding around?

LUCIUS
Why? Why should I?. I can do whatever I want. We're not accountable to anybody. We cross lines. We bend truths. This is a business. You better get that into your pretty little head and stamp it on your brain.

NINA
You know, this concert is supposed to be about helping people in trouble.

LUCIUS
I'm in trouble. You're in trouble. We're in trouble.

NINA
Well, maybe we can get somebody to sing for us.

LUCIUS
Apparently not. You've got no pull. You know charity is not about losing money. Charity is like any other business. It has to show a profit, some kind of profit, or it doesn't go on. Now, you might find that ironic, but I don't. It makes perfect sense to me.

VALENTINE
I think we should pull the plug.

12 CONTINUED: 12

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You're only worried about your legacy, honey. That's all you've ever cared about. I can help. I have a personal relationship with death. Death is my dancing partner.

NINA
It doesn't matter at this point who your dancing partner is. The things you need to say are not the things I need to hear.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
What are you fighting against, anyway? Why are you so opposed to divine judgment?

NINA
Who says I was?

Undaunted, he sidles up to her at the mirror.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I can read right through you. You're a woman with a man's heart. And I'm going to treat you like a man.

NINA
You don't understand. When they heard Jack Fate's name mentioned there was complete silence.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Like reverence. Like prayer.

NINA
I was doing the praying. That they wouldn't cancel the whole thing.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Don't they understand who Jack Fate is?

She pivots around him again.

NINA
Nobody knows who he is anymore. Nobody cares. He doesn't make records. He doesn't tour.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

12 INT. NINA'S TRAILER - DAY 12

Nina, cramped in her trailer, harangues a lascivious Uncle Sweetheart, in a dynamic that resembles Groucho Marx and Margaret Dumont.

NINA
You have put me in a very bad position.

Uncle Sweetheart moves in on her.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I can put you in a very good position. I know a lot of them. I bet you do, too. Why don't we go back to your place?

NINA
And do what?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I could teach you farming in your living room.

NINA
You know, Uncle Sweetheart, I'm not your straight man.

She pushes past him. He follows behind, attempting to kiss her neck.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I'm a straight man. Isn't that what you're looking for?

NINA
(as she resists)
What was I thinking? I know what I was thinking. I was thinking, "I'm not going to discuss this with you." You're not going to help. You're gonna hurt me.

But, she hurts him instead, delivering an elbow to the solar plexus leaving him doubled over as she cooly fixes herself up in a mirror.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2) 12

NINA (cont'd)
He doesn't do interviews. He doesn't do anything!

UNCLE SWEETHEART
He don't have to. He's a legend. Does Jesus have to walk on water twice to make a point? And, he's virtually free. Who else can you say that about?

She moves to door and readies to exit.

NINA
Virtually free. If he's virtually free, he's the only one I know...

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You know, I thought I saw a hubcap in the sky last night.

She exits. He follows.

NINA
Oh, did you. Maybe they were just bright lights from a Japanese squid boat..

On the soundstage floor he pulls out his bottle and unscrews the cap.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Let's try the kickapoo cure.

NINA
(disgusted)
You're like a Trojan horse pregnant with Greeks.

She leaves him alone. He drinks to her.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. BUS STOP 13

A local, PROSPERO, sits and waits for the bus. Jack Fate, with a small bag and a guitar, joins him.

JACK FATE
Hey, Prospero. What's happening?

13 CONTINUED: 13

PROSPERO
You missed it. Two eagles just killed a pregnant rabbit.

JACK FATE
Rabbit must have done something. Where you headin'?

PROSPERO
I'm going down to west Florida. Got a brother-in-law down there. A butcher looking for a delivery boy. My brother-in-law, he's a true friend. One of the purest gifts from god.

JACK FATE
It's good to have at least one true friend.

PROSPERO
(he notices Jack's guitar and bag)
You leaving town?

JACK FATE
Yeah.

PROSPERO
By choice, this time?

JACK FATE
Not really.

PROSPERO
Nothing ever really is. Where ya heading?

Jack motions north.

JACK FATE
That way.

PROSPERO
That's a good direction. I've done that a lot. One of my favorites. You know what else is good? That way.

Prospero motions south.

13 CONTINUED: (2) 13

JACK FATE
Maybe next time.

PROSPERO
You think there's going to be a next time?

JACK FATE
For you, maybe.

We hear the rumble of the oncoming bus.

PROSPERO
You ever coming back?

JACK FATE
I did come back.

With that, the bus arrives, Jack Fate gets on.

CUT TO:

14 INT. BUS - DAY 14

It is a rickety but colorful bus filled with peasants/farmers and the disenfranchised. They carry their children, their belongings, their livestock. Jack fits right in and yet stands apart. He climbs on and addresses the BUS DRIVER.

JACK FATE
Does this bus go across the border?

BUS DRIVER
No, sir, you're going the wrong way.

JACK FATE
OK.

Ignoring the befuddled driver, Jack Fate takes a seat. The mystified Bus Driver presses on.

CUT TO:

15 INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY 15

We angle on TOM FRIEND'S desk. There are numerous awards and citations for journalistic excellence, but they look old and worn and frayed.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: 15

We see old photos of Tom Friend, smiling, happy with three different women, a dog, and a boy. Then, we see Tom Friend himself, a burnt out journalist, numb to all the horrors, except of his own existence, sits reading a magazine. When he's finished, he rises. As he does, we see he has an electronic monitor strapped to his ankle. He walks through the newsroom to the EDITOR'S office. The EDITOR sits at his desk, working and drinking, inside a cubicle. He holds the first edition. The headline reads: Transvestite Jumps To His Death. Outside around him is a nest of journalistic activity. Tom Friend enters.

EDITOR
What're you working on?

TOM FRIEND
You know, I'm working on a few things.

EDITOR
Like what? Give me an idea.

TOM FRIEND
I don't know...

EDITOR
Exactly, you don't know.

TOM FRIEND
What are you drinking?

EDITOR
What am I drinking? I'm drinking my life away. What's the difference?

TOM FRIEND
No difference. It looked like you stopped.

EDITOR
The doctors made me stop for awhile. You want some? It will make you forget that you're poor.

TOM FRIEND
Yeah, but I'm not gonna have any.

EDITOR
Well let me know if you change your mind.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2) 15

TOM FRIEND
What's up?

EDITOR
What's up? I got reporters wounded. Held captive. Held hostage. I got two reporters dead. I got reporters on the front lines. I got reporters undercover. With the insurgents. With the counter-insurgents. I got people inside the capitol. In the office of the President, himself--

TOM FRIEND
I've done all that.

EDITOR
People are still dying out there.

TOM FRIEND
People have always died. So what's new? You can't abolish death. Writing about it doesn't change anything.

EDITOR
You used to believe it did.

TOM FRIEND
I can't write that. You don't write that. You just rewrite it. Over and over again. Everybody's doing the killing now. Everybody's doing the dying. You can't tell the difference. We're all under the sentence of death. What else is new.

EDITOR
Where does that leave you? Are you a journalist or a novelist?

TOM FRIEND
Same thing out here. What's this all about? I got things to do. I got my awards, I got my scars. I got nothing to prove to you. Look at you. You live peacably. You live a private life, while below you the earth reeks with desolation and runs with blood.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (3) 15

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
You're so high and mighty with your printing press. You've done unspeakable things. You've seen unspeakable things. You've caused unspeakable things. For what, for business men to enrich themselves?

EDITOR
Now wait a minute. Right and wrong are anything but black and white.

TOM FRIEND
For you maybe.

EDITOR
You don't realize how good you have it. You're accountable to nobody and everybody knows it. The whole civilized world shakes in its boots when you come. And you know why? You can make heroes out of bums and villains out of good upstanding people with the stroke of your pen. You've got the right to slander anybody, assassinate anybody's character. You can tell any kind of story you want and you never have to reveal your sources. It's called freedom of the press, first amendment rights. You're a reporter and a reporter looks up to no one. Remember that...
(then)
You're like a son to me. Why do you hate me?

TOM FRIEND
What do you want?

EDITOR
There's a benefit concert.

TOM FRIEND
A benefit concert?

EDITOR
Yeah for medical relief. It's going to be broadcast on the network. The network is government controlled. I wanna know if it's a PR thing.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (4) 15

EDITOR (cont'd)
I wanna know if they're trying to make themselves look compassionate. I wanna know if it's some kind of setup. Or if it's some nefarious ploy to weed out the rebels. There's a story there.

TOM FRIEND
Come on. That's no story. That's every story. That is the story.

EDITOR
Make it into something. Or, make something up.

TOM FRIEND
(pause)
How much time do I have to do this? I don't have a lot of time.

EDITOR
A lot of time? Lincoln delivered the immortal Gettysburg Address in under five minutes. Don't tell me about time.

Pause.

EDITOR
OK, here's something else...there's only one performer.

TOM FRIEND
Only one?

EDITOR
Yeah, Jack Fate.

Tom absorbs this information. This has clearly more significance then he anticipated. He is thrown by the revelation then:

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
OK... I changed my mind.

EDITOR
About what.

TOM FRIEND
About what? About everything.

15 CONTINUED: (5) 15

EDITOR
About everything?

Editor holds up his liquor bottle, invitingly. Tom Friend, takes it and pours a drink.

TOM FRIEND
Everything...

The Editor gives Tom the key to unlock his ankle monitor.

CUT TO:

16 INT. BUS - NIGHT 16

Jack Fate and a SOLDIER sit together. The soldier speaks. As he does, we move down the aisle of the bus, looking at the busdriver, the passengers, their faces, their hope and disappointment and resignation, then out the window at the squalor and remnants of violence and war.

SOLDIER
I'm from a small village in the mountains. We don't even have a doctor. So I joined the rebels. I didn't know what the answers were. I still don't. I just knew you had to take sides. You had to fight. There were no sidelines. There were no innocent bystanders. Only the dead and the living. Pretty soon, I saw the rebel movement was corrupt. The leadership were lying to the people. They wanted to replace the old government with a new government which was just as bad. They were taking money, making promises they had no intention of keeping. A small army of counter-revolutionaries grew to battle the rebels in the mountains where the government forces were ineffective. I changed sides. No one ever noticed. This new movement was fighting for the truth the rebels supposedly believed in but really didn't. Then I realized that this movement was funded by the very government I wanted to topple.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: 16

SOLDIER (cont'd)
By that time, I realized I didn't want the government to fall. It would only be replaced with anarchy. I started believing in preserving the republic, so I joined the government forces. I fought bravely for the cause. Suffered wounds, sickness. My own family turned on me. Disowned me. I tried to explain, but they wouldn't listen. Then one day, we wiped out a small village. We were told something about rebels having infiltrated. But it was a lie. The men were already dead or old. All that was left were women and children. It was my village. I couldn't participate. I ran. I was caught and dishonorably discharged. Now, I'm returning to my village, a village that may no longer even exist, disabled, dishonored, shamed.

The camera moves past Jack, listening to the soldier, his face, a mask of loss and pain. He offers Jack Fate a drink. Jack Fate declines. The soldier offers Jack some pills. Jack declines again.

SOLDIER (cont'd)
When I sleep, my dreams become my reality. If only I would live in my dreams. Do you ever dream?

JACK FATE
Yeah, I dream. In my dreams I'm walking through fire with intense heat, but I don't pay any attention to my dreams.

The soldier takes his pills with the liquor and goes to sleep, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

17 INT. TOM FRIEND'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 17

Tom Friend's woman, PAGAN LACE, kneels before a small shrine. It includes candles, fruit, small totems and fetishes, jars of liquid, red and yellow, a damaged bust of a woman and a painting of the president of this unnamed country in military garb. In a repetitive ritual of sorts she counts, she washes, she pours, she counts again while she prays.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: 17

PAGAN LACE
Lord, how are they increased that trouble me. Many are they that rise up against me...Arise O'Lord: Save me, oh my god, for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone, thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly...

Tom Friend enters and kneels beside Pagan Lace. He is silent and sullen. She ignores him at first until she completes her ritual. Then:

PAGAN LACE
What's the matter, Tom? You look disturbed.

TOM FRIEND
Yea, 'cause there's always something the matter, right?

PAGAN LACE
I don't want there to be.

TOM FRIEND
You don't understand. You can't stay honest out there even if you wanted to.

PAGAN LACE
What do you mean? What's changed?

TOM FRIEND
The pervert is the top man now. Man of the hour.

She becomes distracted, listening to the voice inside her head. Annoyed, He starts to pack. Then:

PAGAN LACE
What did you say?... Where are you going?

TOM FRIEND
I'm gonna be gone for a couple of days. Maybe you shouldn't be here when I get back.

17 CONTINUED: (2) 17

PAGAN LACE
But I want to be with you. We can have a good time.

TOM FRIEND
Good times don't last long.

PAGAN LACE
Why are you making everything so tragic?

TOM FRIEND
Tragic? What do you know about tragic? Every period in history has been more or less tragic.

He continues packing. He adjusts his boot, and we see a knife protruding from it. Pagan drifts off, repeating the prayer to herself, mumbling, lips moving. Then, she is seized by a new thought; as if she's been told to ask this question.

PAGAN LACE
Tom, if you had to kill somebody, how would you do it? With a gun, a knife, or a club?

TOM FRIEND
With my bare hands.

He embraces her.

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
Look, it's an overcrowded world, it's hard to get to the top. There's a long line at the elevator.

PAGAN
It doesn't matter, Tom. We'll take the stairs. Let me go with you.

As they embrace, Tom opens an ornate box on a dresser. Inside is a pistol and hypodermic needle. He kisses Pagan Lace on the neck, like a vampire. She fully capitulates, as we:

CUT TO:

18 INT. BUS - NEXT DAY 18

Jack Fate and Soldier, both asleep. On the bus, somebody has a radio. The bus suddenly comes to a stop. There is a commotion outside. Through the window, we see a group of armed men harassing some villages and blocking the path of the bus. The two men awaken and observe.

JACK FATE
What's going on? Who are these guys?

SOLDIER
The Counter-revolutionaries. They've stopped the bus.

JACK FATE
Where are they from?

SOLDIER
Rome, Paris, Vienna, Moscow. Who knows? They're from wherever they're from.

JACK FATE
What now? What do they want with the bus?

SOLDIER
Anything they can get away with. They might just harass us and let us go. They might kill us or force us to join them. They might drug us. Who knows. They don't trust anybody, not even their commander.

We see the soldiers harassment has intensified.

SOLDIER (cont'd)
Violence is the only tool they know, the only one in their box. You can't build a house with only one tool. I've got that tool in my box, too. I'll show them.

He gets up, gets his gun from his bag and jumps off the bus. We stay on the face of Jack Fate. He hears angry words exchanged. The bus abruptly takes off. Jack Fate looks out the rear window as the rebels assassinate the soldier in a flurry of gunfire. Jack, might wince a bit reflexively at the sound of the gunfire.

18 CONTINUED: 18

The women and children shriek. But Jack's reaction is not of fear or surprise. He's come to expect this in the world he lives in.

BUS DRIVER
They have no ideology. They'd push both Jesus and Judas aside. . .

As the bus rambles on, we

CUT TO:

19 INT. BAR - DAY 19

BOBBY CUPID, young, volatile, reckless, fearless, foolish, devotee of Jack Fate, his main and possibly only remaining apostle is tending bar. It's early in the morning and there's one DRUNK drinking.

BOBBY CUPID
Sun's coming up.

DRUNK
Big shit. It comes up every day. Bother me when the sun don't come up.

BOBBY CUPID
I'll do that...

Bobby Cupid walks away.

DRUNK
Hey, do I need to ring a bell to get a refill? You see my glass is empty.

BOBBY CUPID
Your glass is always empty. And so is the space on the counter where your money's supposed to be.

DRUNK
Kid, you keep this shit up and you ain't gonna make it to middle age.

BOBBY CUPID
Put your money on the counter.

DRUNK
I ain't kidding.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: 19

BOBBY CUPID
No, of course not.

DRUNK
Tell me, I'd like to know who's presiding over this slaughterhouse -- you or me?

BOBBY CUPID
Look, tough guy. If you want the world to be flat, it's flat. If you want it to be round, it can be round.

DRUNK
You son of a bitch. I know a lot of things.

BOBBY CUPID
The more you know, the more you'll suffer.

DRUNK
You got that right.

Phone rings. Bobby Cupid answers it.

BOBBY CUPID
Hello...who? Jack Fate!...hell yeah, I'll accept the charges...Hey...What's that?...What am I doing?...You're shitting me. You're out of the can? ...You're gonna perform?...A benefit concert? OK...No, I think I can get away...I got some sick time coming to me...Shit, I'll be there before you hang up...Oh, yeah, watch me. Since when did you start doing benefits from the lockup?

Bobby hangs up and prepares to leave.

BOBBY CUPID (cont'd)
Hey, man. No hard feelings. But I'm sure the next guy that serves you a drink will draw the same conclusions.

The drunk blocks Bobby Cupid's path.

DRUNK
I've had enough out of you.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: (2) 19

The Drunk pulls a gun and lunges at Bobby Cupid. Bobby grabs a large birdcage with the large bird still inside it and smacks the drunk upside the head. The bird SQUAWKS and flies around inside the cage. In short order the man is down and out. Bobby Cupid looks up. There's no one in the bar. He throws on his snakeskin jacket and walks out into the harsh sunlight.

CUT TO:

20 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 20

Two crew guys working on the stage.

ONE
I took my wife to Russia. We had a guide over there named Rudolph.

TWO
You don't say?

ONE
We were leaving, and it started to snow, and I said to my wife, "Look dear, it's snowing." And the guide says, "No, it's raining." And my wife says to me, "It must be raining. Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear."

They exchange a glance.

CUT TO:

21 INT. BUS STATION - DAY 21

It is a bustling station: People come and go on their way to who knows where. Jack Fate hangs up the pay phone and begins to head towards his bus. Another person immediately takes the phone. They check for change. Jack is intercepted by a beautiful but tarted up, vulgarly attired woman. The bus starts its engine.

WOMAN
I know you, do you remember me?

JACK FATE
I don't know, my memory's blocked.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: 21

WOMAN
Down on Coliseum Street, the Inferno Club? I was the lady in red, you made up a song for me.

JACK FATE
Oh yeah. Lady in red. Slow, dreamy ballad.

WOMAN
The Inferno Club burned down. You were there that night.

JACK FATE
Oh was I?

WOMAN
Would you like to go out? Sensuality is my specialty.

JACK FATE
I got a radical hostility towards sensuality.

WOMAN
Oh, do you. How do you feel about bikinis?

JACK FATE
Bikinis infuriate me.

WOMAN
Oh, you sound like a bad man. You got anymore songs in you?

JACK FATE
I don't know.

WOMAN
Let's go find out, shall we?

Jack checks his watch. It's broken.

JACK FATE
All right, let's go see.

They walk away together as Jack's bus pulls out of the station.

CUT TO:

22 INT. PALATIAL MANSION - DAY 22

A darkly disturbed, voracious and ambitious man, EDMUND, emerges from behind a curtained area. We get a glimpse behind the curtain, of a sick old man being attended to. Edmund is joined by another man, EDGAR, as they walk purposely to some destination, reviewing and signing papers.

EDGAR
Does he have any idea about this concert?

EDMUND
Of course not.

EDGAR
Should we tell him?

EDMUND
Of course not.

EDGAR
You saw who the headliner is going to be.

EDMUND
I like Stravinsky and Beethoven. Schubert's really good. Modern music doesn't do much for me. And, frankly, it doesn't do much for the President, either.

EDGAR
At least it's not some banjo player. Is there anything we should do?

EDMUND
If they had gotten a big star to headline the concert, we might need to take action. Disrupt it. Discredit it. But they couldn't get a big star. Big stars think it's too dangerous here. Big stars like doing benefits, it eases their guilt ridden consciences, but only if the benefit is held someplace where they won't be shot at. Big stars don't understand what's going on here.
(MORE)

22 CONTINUED: 22

EDMUND (cont'd)
And big stars don't want to put their lives on the line for a cause they don't understand.

EDGAR
Except Jack Fate.

EDMUND
Jack Fate doesn't understand anything. And, he's not a big star.

They chortle at this. Then, they stop. Edmund signs the last piece of paper and they go their separate ways.

CUT TO:

23 INT. STAGE - DAY 23

Work is progressing on the stage. Nina and Uncle Sweetheart stand in the midst.

NINA
He's not here.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
How do you know?

NINA
I don't see him.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Maybe he's like Claude Raines in that movie, "The Invisible Man".

NINA
Who? If he doesn't show up you'd better get invisible.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You gotta learn how to wait. You're going too fast. You gotta wait for life to unfold sometimes.

NINA
Wait? Like some animal caught in a trap waiting for someone to deliver the last blow?

23 CONTINUED: 23

UNCLE SWEETHEART
No, no, no. Not that kind of wait. More like a fisherman when he can't go to sea, he repairs nets.

NINA
Fisherman or not, you don't understand, we're hanging on by a thread.

Uncle Sweetheart steps up to Nina Veronica and looks uncomfortably into her face. She holds her ground.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I can see my reflection in the pupil of your eye.

NINA
You have no idea where he is.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You're exhausting your emotional repertoire. If all of us are hanging by a thread we ain't got a chance anyway.

He gives up and walks away.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
(sotto)
Why don't you go have your tits tightened...

Before he exits, he turns to Nina Veronica.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
I'm going around the corner to get some fried chicken, grits and sweet potatoes. If I hear anything I'll let you know.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. STREET - DAY 24

Dawn approaches as the bus Jack rides on follows its route through the streets of this unnamed city, past burnt out buildings, burnt out people. Past signs and storefronts in a variety of foreign languages. It is quiet like a Sunday morning.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: 24

We follow the bus on a serpentine trail, down obscure side streets past boarded up buildings and closed warehouses. The distinguishing characteristic that unifies these disparate locations are gigantic Mao-like posters plastered everywhere of an intimidating, mythical, strong-arm leader in the Stalin, Tito, Khomeini, Hussein, Pinochet, Noriega mode. He stares out at us, Big Brother-like, ubiquitously, with accompanying aphoristic slogans.

The bus stops in the middle of a bustling multi-cultured downtown. Signs and speech are in every conceivable language, every conceivable alphabet. Jack Fate exits with his guitar and his bag and walks to a once grand, now dilapidated hotel. THE WHITMAN. He enters.

CUT TO:

25 INT. HOTEL - DAY 25

Jack Fate walks toward the lobby, past the broken down men, who now inhabit this place. On the wall is a Diego Rivera-like mural depicting the great works of the President. He approaches the DESK CLERK and picks up a pen.

JACK FATE
Place looks familiar. I think I stayed here before.

DESK CLERK
Well, welcome back.

JACK FATE
Your pen's still out of ink.

DESK CLERK
Not a problem, sir. You here for the concert?

JACK FATE
Yeah. Isn't everybody?

DESK CLERK
Oh, yes. They're trying to change the social order. Get rid of the ruling class. Get corruption out of this state.

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: 25

JACK FATE
That's a worthy ambition.

DESK CLERK
This whole country's preoccupied with waste. Will you be in need of a woman, sir?

JACK FATE
What kind of woman you mean?

DESK CLERK
We got all kinds. We got slave women, immigrant women, white women, black women, young women, old, middle-aged, rich, poor, middle class women, free women, Western women, Northern women, Southern women, educated, illiterate, radical women, modern. They run the gamut. Which kind you like?

JACK FATE
I just wanna sleep. Lemme have a room.

DESK CLERK
I'm gonna give you the same room Nixon slept in the night before he gave that famous speech to the press, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore." Gonna give you that room. It's got the most comfortable bed in the house.

JACK FATE
I'll take that one. What are your politics, anyway?

DESK CLERK
I don't belong to any political party. I guess you could call me a feminist, sir... Your pen sir. It's filled.

Jack Fate signs in. The Desk Clerk dangles the keys. Jack takes them, and heads to the elevator.

CUT TO:

26 INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY 26

Jack Fate enters the room. It is a sparsely furnished, plain room. Above the bed is a portrait of the President. He throws his stuff down and picks up the phone. He dials. It rings. Then:

(V.O.)
You have reached the official residence of the President. Built in 1714. Burned down in 1809. Rebuilt in 1818. Burned down again in 1841. Rebuilt in 1853. Burned down again in --

Jack Fate hangs up. He opens his guitar case and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper. It contains another phone number. He dials. It rings. We

CUT TO:

27 FLASHBACK #4 - APPROXIMATELY 1963 - NIGHT 27

This flashback is more ominous, darker. It is purely handheld, hidden footage of the father, being driven in a limousine at night to an unspecified location. The driver opens the door, and exits the limo. He approaches the front door of a modest house. A beautiful YOUNG WOMAN answers. He enters. As he does, a series of stills is snapped...

JACK FATE
...My father controlled a lot of things, a lot of people, but he couldn't control my mother. He sacrificed everything he ever wanted to reach his destiny. But there were things in his head that he could never get out of his head. He had worked himself up from nothing. From the cathouses and gambling joints, he rose to the top rung of civilization. He knew the value of hard work. He knew that if he made one false step, he'd lose his place forever. But when he reached the top, he stopped working.

CUT TO:

28 INT. PALATIAL BEDROOM - DAY 28

The sick old man in the bed doesn't stir when the phone rings. Instead, a caretaker answers.

CARETAKER
Hello...

CUT TO:

29 INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY 29

Jack Fate hangs up.

CUT TO:

30 INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT 30

Uncle Sweetheart sits at the bar, drinking. On stage, a band plays cover versions of Jack Fate songs. Jack enters. Uncle Sweetheart rushes up to him.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Hey, hey, give your Uncle Sweetheart a hug...

Uncle Sweetheart hugs a reticent Jack Fate.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Hey, you're all skin and bones.

JACK FATE
Aren't we all. Anyway, I don't have to throw my weight around. Look at you. You've put on a few pounds.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Uncle Sweetheart takes Jack into the bar.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Lemme show you this place. I own a piece of it.

JACK FATE
Which piece?

30 CONTINUED: 30

UNCLE SWEETHEART
It changes every day. I've been told the profit potential will eventually offset the operating expenses. Could be a gold mine. Who knows? Come on, sit down. There's a chair. Plant your ass in it. You look good. You got the jail pale. It suits ya.

JACK FATE
What do you got cooked up, Sweetheart? What's your angle?

Uncle Sweetheart is happy to oblige.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
This is going to be a patriotic rhapsody, Jack. Here's the deal. You're working for the people. The peasants. The children. Imagine yourself being reincarnated in the civil war in Babylon.

JACK FATE
Civil war in Babylon?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Come on son, snap out of it. You gotta stand up on your tiptoes to see the future.

JACK FATE
You're the same old sorry sight. Same old baggy-pants philosopher.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Yes. And remember this, if nothing else -- we philosophers cannot change our minds. Look, man, this is our big chance.

JACK FATE.
Another big chance.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Yeah, that's right. You do this show, this benefit, it's gonna be broadcast all over the world. You get your career back on track, maybe a tour, maybe a record, maybe both.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED: (2) 30

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Make a little money AND save the world, all at the same time. It's all politics, Jack, and money is the mother's milk of politics. And we'll be raking it in.

JACK FATE
You're so crazy. You know you're not gonna make any of those things happen.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
So?

Jack laughs. So does Uncle Sweetheart.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
So, will you play?

JACK FATE
Of course I'll play. You know I'll play.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Good. I already told 'em you would.

Uncle Sweetheart enjoys his own joke.

JACK FATE
You couldn't get anybody else, could you?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I didn't even attempt it. Didn't even cross my mind. Nobody could be like you, and a great many have tried. I know it'll come off.

JACK FATE
I need some boys to back me up.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I got some musicians here, Jack. Some cats who are never late.

JACK FATE
What do you mean? Late for what?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Well, they never play behind the beat.

This fails to get a rise out of Jack.

30 CONTINUED: (3) 30

JACK FATE
Oh, yeah. That kind of late.

Uncle Sweetheart motions to the stage.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Feast your eyes on The Hand Of Fate. The best and only Jack Fate cover band in the world...

Uncle Sweetheart stands up. Ubiquitous whiskey bottle in hand.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Ladies and gentlemen, I have a special treat for you this evening. Not only do we possess the Hand of Fate this evening. We possess the whole body!

Attention shifts to a chagrined Jack Fate. The band and the audience are excited at his presence in the club. Reluctantly, he is coaxed on stage. He huddles with the band, conferring for a moment, then kicks into "All Along The Watchtower"

LYRICS:

"There must be some way out of here," said the joker to the thief,

"There's too much confusion, I can't get no relief.

Businessmen, they drink my wine, plowmen dig my earth.

None of them along the line know what any of it is worth."

"No reason to get excited," the thief, he kindly spoke,

"There are many here among us who feel that life is but a joke.

But you and I, we've been through that, and this is not our fate,

So let us not talk falsely now, the hour is getting late."

30 CONTINUED: (4) 30

All along the watchtower, princes kept the view

While all the women came and went, barefoot servants, too.

Outside in the distance a wildcat did growl,

Two riders were approaching, the wind began to howl.

When it's over, Jack thanks the band. Everyone responds enthusiastically. Clearly, the magic exists. But Jack unstraps his guitar and exits. As he passes Uncle Sweetheart:

JACK FATE
They play good.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I told you they would.

JACK FATE
Where'd you get these guys?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Appeared before my eyes.

JACK FATE
What a pleasant surprise.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Me too, I was hypnotized.

This is a game they play. A rhyming game. Satisfied, Jack exits.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. STREET - NEXT DAY 31

Jack walks past a group of homeless people who stand around a bonfire, the radio preacher's omnipresent voice bellows out of the same homeless man's broken boom box.

RADIO PREACHER (V.O.)
The only power the government has is to crack down on criminals. When there aren't enough criminals, you make them. You make so many things a crime that it becomes impossible to live without breaking laws.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED: 31

RADIO PREACHER (cont'd)
Who wants a nation of law-abiding citizens? What's there in that for anyone? You pass laws that can't be observed or enforced or even objectively interpreted. You create a nation of lawbreakers and then you cash in on guilt. That's the system, that's the game. Once you understand that you'll sleep a lot easier. Remember, life is like riding in a taxi, even if you're not going anywhere, the meter is ticking.

A pickup truck with armed men glides by. They eye Jack warily as if they recognize him.

CUT TO:

32 EXT. SOUNDSTAGE - MORNING 32

Jack reaches the SOUNDSTAGE and is stopped by an ARMED MAN (in civilian clothes). The man stops Jack, gazes into his eyes, scrutinizing him, trying to look within.

ARMED MAN
How'd they ever get you to do this? I didn't think you performed anymore. They must be scraping the bottom of the barrel.

JACK FATE
I might have a few songs left. How'd they get you into this? You used to be a student. You know how to use one of those?

ARMED MAN
Yeah, they taught me. I can shoot it, clean it, and take it apart. They taught me a bunch of other stuff too. I can tell a military officer's rank just by looking at his insignia. You ever hear of the Brown Bomber?

JACK FATE
Name rings a bell.

ARMED MAN
The only boxer buried in Arlington. Joe Lewis. Great American.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: 32

ARMED MAN (cont'd)
Lived a tough life. You wouldn't try anything, would you?

JACK FATE
I got a lot of respect for a gun.

The Armed Man motions for Jack to enter.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. SOUNDSTAGE - MORNING 33

Jack Fate enters and walks past an ANIMAL WRANGLER, who has his vehicle parked in front of a pen set up for the animals to roam around in. They include a pig, a snake, a goat, a sheep, and a HUMAN who sits quietly amongst them. He and Jack exchange eye contact, as he seems to prepare some sort of barbecue pit. He heats the coals, cleans the grill, sharpens utensils. As he talks we will examine the similarities between the animals and the humans: Their eyes, noses, hair, etc.

JACK FATE
Beautiful animals.

ANIMAL WRANGLER
I'll thank you. But it's God that deserves the credit. They have no time to bother with success or getting rich. They have no fantasies of glory. They don't borrow money to buy things that decrease in value while they own it. See, they're beautiful 'cause they just are. They do what they do. A lion don't try to be a tiger. A rabbit don't do an impression of a monkey. They don't try to be what they're not. Unlike us. Us human beings. I don't care if I ever see another one. I'm not talking about animals, I'm talking about human beings. Every human being, all of mankind. The only reason they're here is to destroy the planet. Human beings have been sent here on some ungodly mission. These animals, they were here first. They roamed freely, each one with its own identity and place. Animals should be cherished. They bring joy to the world.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: 33

ANIMAL WRANGLER (cont'd)
The animal kingdom, the greatest kingdom on earth. You know who's destroying the earth? Not the animals. The tiger the lion, the cheetah, the snake, the monkey, the baboon, the giraffe, the bear, the panther, the dog, fish, the birds, all perfect in their original forms. Then -- man came in. Who created him and for what purpose? Still a mystery. Why is he here? A mystery. He's a trespasser. Doesn't know his place. Of course he doesn't know his place, he doesn't have one. Man, the bear hunter, the fur trapper, the deer chaser. The lowest form in existence. A spoiler, an agitator, stirs up trouble wherever he goes. The zoo, the aquarium, prisons for animals. These animals cannot learn anything from mankind. Man doesn't have a thing to teach them. Man is here to conquer and destroy and after he's done with the animals, he'll turn on himself. You'll see. I avcid looking at human beings. They disgust me so much with all their atom bombs and automobiles. Two shivering bicycle mechanics, from Dayton, Ohic, inventing a contraption called an airplane. How insane. All the forms and shapes. They build hospitals for diseases they create. Human beings? Alone with their secrets. No one truly knows them. If I go through the day without seeing one, I ccnsider that a good day. My soul has not been contaminated. The only righteous human beings in my book are the children and the elderly. Muslim, Jew, Christian, atheist, secular humanist. All these religions, ideologies, titles, all the same. Going down toward the same pit. I look at a crack in the sidewalk and I find it more beautiful than any human being. You know what I mean?

JACK FATE
Yeah, something like a curse, I guess, being born.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: (2) 33

ANIMAL WRANGLER
That's right. We live in fear. We're afraid 'cause we know we're going to die. Animals don't know they're going to die. They have no fear. They live in the moment.
(saddling a horse)
Man is a wretched thing, compared to the mountains, the clouds, the water, the insects, the wind... a wretched thing. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I hope when I die, I'm reincarnated as an animal. Many lives ago I must have been rabbit. I know, because in this life, I don't stand up for myself. Next time, if I can, I'm going to come back as an ox...Animals, they have no consciousness of death, unlike us. Amazing grace indeed. Knowledge of it, of death, it's a harmful thing. It holds us back. It makes you crazy, knowledge of death. Amazing grace indeed.

JACK FATE
Oh, man.

ANIMAL WRANGLER
I'll tell you something else. In most societies they used to sacrifice animals. Bulls and sheep and things. In place of human beings. But today, we do it the other way around, we sacrifice the human being. Like the Aztecs, like the Incas, like the big corporations. Amazing grace indeed.

And with that, he begins to slaughter an animal for the barbecue as Uncle Sweetheart shows up and guides Jack inside.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
What was that all about?

JACK FATE
Guy's into animals, I guess.

33 CONTINUED: (3) 33

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Come on inside, I gotta show you this place. You'll love it. It's right up your alley. The networks are really behind this thing. Puttin' up a lot of dough for this...It's a bitched up world, Jack. You know what I mean? The only way we can protect ourselves is by going mad.

They enter the soundstage.

CUT TO:

34 INT. SOUNDSTAGE 34

ANGLE ON, the two crew guys from before, as they work.

CREW GUY #1
All this talk about race this, and race that. Ethnic this and ethnic that. Lemme tell you something, there's only two races, workers and bosses.

ANGLE ON, Uncle Sweetheart and Jack as they pass the crew guys and others, making their way across the soundstage.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
This place is historic, Jack. This is one of the first TV stations ever built down here. It's like the Metropolitan Opera House. The Astors and the Vanderbilts sat side by side in boxes here. Houdini tied himself up in ropes and chains and hung himself from the rafters and yelled, "Watch me now, see what can I do!"... Some famous star from the Jazz Age was disfigured right on this stage during a live show. I can't remember the sucker's name. What the hell was that guy's name?

JACK FATE
(looking around)
I don't know who you're talking about.

34 CONTINUED: 34

UNCLE SWEETHEART
How long's it been since you played to this many people?

JACK FATE
I don't see anybody here.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Nah, they're not here yet, but they will be. In droves. Masses of the adoring public, acolytes. Imagine it. Pandemonium, mass hysteria.

JACK FATE
You're a sick man.

They wind up at Nina's trailer as she steps out.

NINA
At least we agree on something.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I told you he's here. You were worried. Miss Veronica, meet Jack Fate.

NINA
Oh, yeah. I had one of your first albums. It's a shame. It's one of the things my husband took during the divorce. So you think you're ready for this?

JACK FATE
Yeah, I'm ready as I'll ever be. Look, I got some things to do. I'll see you later, maybe.

He exits.

NINA
I hope you got this cat's priorities in order. Have you explained the restrictions, the limitations, the boundaries, the rules?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Well we've talked about it.

34 CONTINUED: (2) 34

NINA
I hope you know we're dealing with the here and now....You can't compare the here and now with the there and then....I don't care what he's done in the past.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Calm down. Everything's under control.

NINA
Are his songs going to be recognizable? That's what I want to know.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
All of his songs are recognizable, even if they're not recognizable. Don't worry about it.

NINA
Look. The whole world is going to be our studio audience. We don't want to ruffle any feathers.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
One huge, immense, gigantic studio audience. The whole world.

NINA
Yes, that's right. Will we be able to deliver?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Of course we're going to deliver. We don't conspire against liberty. We don't reduce the public to slavery. We know right where we are and where everything else is. We don't chase things that are out of reach.

And with that, he awkwardly backs away.

NINA
(to herself)
You're so spontaneous.

CUT TO:

35 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 35

Jack steps on the makeshift stage and joins the band. He plugs in, counts down, and they launch into "Wicked Messenger".

Lyrics:

There was a wicked messenger
From Eli he did come,
With a mind that multiplied
The smallest matter.
When questioned who had sent for him,
He answered with his thumb,
For his tongue it could not speak, but only flatter.
He stayed behind the assembly hall,
It was there he made his bed,
Oftentimes he could be seen returning.
Until one day he just appeared
With a note in his hand which read,
"The soles of my feet, I swear they're burning."
Oh, the leaves began to fallin'
And the seas began to part,
And the people that confronted him were many.
And he was told but these few words,
Which opened up his heart,
"If ye cannot bring good news, then don't bring any."

CUT TO:

36 INT. JACK'S DRESSING ROOM TRAILER - DAY 36

Uncle Sweetheart and Jack Fate acclimate themselves. Uncle Sweetheart pours himself a drink while Jack Fate tries to get a picture on a TV that doesn't work.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Troubles, I don't talk about my troubles while they're happening. I'll tell you about them when they're over. Anyway, I slept like a log last night. I got so much shit happening man, I'm gonna turn this into Woodstock, Altamont, the Beatles at Shea, Live-Aid,and the Elvis comeback special all rolled into one.

JACK FATE
We'll see. We'll see.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I know what you're thinking, man, but I feel good about this. I feel like someone who's lived 10,000 years, that has seventeen senses and is standing ankle high in the Atlantic.

JACK FATE
Yeah, well, I hope you can pull it off.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Wait a minute.

JACK FATE
Who's that?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
The greatest human menagerie since the Stone Age. At our services, no mediocrity here. Totally beyond criticism. I got all the artists here who are gonna round out this show and fill up the bill.

Uncle Sweetheart opens the door and a motley crew of freaks and weirdos wade in. We recognize some of them from the pictures on Uncle Sweetheart's wall.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: 36

They include a FORTUNE TELLER, a female CONTORTIONIST, a seedy MAGICIAN, a VENTRILOQUIST and his DUMMY, and a masked WRESTLER in a suit.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Come on in. Come on in.

They surround an uncomfortable Jack Fate and exchange awkward, but polite pleasantries.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
...Ella the Fortune Teller...Brenda the Body Bender...Jean Darkness... Eddie Quicksand and Milo... the great El Mundo...

A group of look alikes follows.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
And of course...Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, Rudolf Valentino.

Behind them, BOBBY CUPID enters. Uncle Sweetheart is not happy to see him.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Oh, lookey, here. Look what the cat dragged in. Bobby Cupid, who let you in? Jack, did you know he was coming? Where's your passport?

BOBBY CUPID
I don't need no stinking passport.

Jack Fate moves in front of Uncle Sweetheart and embraces Bobby Cupid.

BOBBY CUPID
(quietly)
The land is too big out there, man. After awhile it starts to swallow you up.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
(dejected)
A million years of weather and wind.

BOBBY CUPID
I got a surprise for you. Wait'll you see this.

(CONTINUED)

36 CONTINUED: (2) 36

He hands Jack a guitar in a beaten up, old case.

JACK FATE
What's that?

BOBBY CUPID
That my friend is Blind Lemon's guitar.

The crowd is impressed. Jack admires it. He takes it out of the case and examines it with reverence.

JACK FATE
Who'd you get this from?

BOBBY CUPID
I've been saving it for you.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
It don't look very new.

BOBBY CUPID
It's so old that it is new.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
How do you know it belonged to Blind Lemon?

BOBBY CUPID
I got it from an old boy in Dallas. They were moving stuff out of a house in the 5th ward, near where Lightning used to live. Blind Lemon gave it to him when he was leading him around.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
It looks like the only thing you can play on that guitar is solitaire.

BOBBY CUPID
This is one of the guitars that started it all.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
It looks like something I could go out to the corner pawnshop and buy another one just like it.

36 CONTINUED: (3) 36

BOBBY CUPID
Maybe you could, but it wouldn't be like this one. This is the one that played "Match Box Blues."

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Oh yeah, "Match Box Blues:"
Sittin' here wondering,
Would a matchbox hold my clothes?
Ain't got so many matches,
But I got so far to go.
Just like me and you Jack, we got so far to go.

BOBBY CUPID
I'm gonna go put some new strings on this.

Jack hands the guitar carefully back to Bobby Cupid, who exits.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
(under his breath)
See you later, the later the better.

CUT TO:

37 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - NINA'S TRAILER - DAY 37

Nina sits at her desk, on the phone.

NINA
...Come on. We have to hang in there. Let's not quit now and give up the ship...Yes, Lucius, I agree. It does look pessimistic and gloomy, but neither of us can predict what may be around the next corner... Lucius, listen. You can shake down the insurance companies if you have to, you know you can. The government only exists to help business. The businesses themselves can help the rest of the country. We have to take a stand. Whether others like it or not is irrelevant... I know what you're saying, but we don't have to sell our souls for the applause of others...We do?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED: 37

NINA (cont'd)
Well, I don't look at it that way...Yes, Lucius, I'll do my best, I understand...

She hangs up and exits.

CUT TO:

38 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 38

Nina crosses the stage. As she passes the two crew members, we angle on them as they work. Finally, they stop, put down their tools. CREW GUY #1 wipes his brow. They head to the craft services table to get a beverage. As they do:

CREW GUY #1
I'm getting weary of living by this clock. It's all smoke and mirrors. I want to live in real time, in the terms of day and night. I'm sick of this merchants' time, businessman's time, clocks and bells signaling the hours. It's all just some gimmick, this physical time. I just wanna live in psychic time. Just once, see how it feels. One of these days I'm going to live in time suspended.

CREW GUY #2
Maybe in your next life, but right now we're still here.

CREW GUY #1
Did you ever notice when you dream a dream seems to span several hours, but it actually lasts only a few minutes. That's what I mean by suspended time. One of these days, I'm going to get beyond the traditional boundaries of time and be able to appreciate the truly infinite nature of time and space. I'm going to kick back. I want to experience a timeless moment just once... By the way, who's the big fella, the joker they call Sweetheart?

CREW GUY #2
Oh, him. Some big time promoter out of Cleveland.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: 38

CREW GUY #1
What did he promote?

CREW GUY #2
Lots of things, I guess. He used to do some wrestling shows. All kinds of talent. Some comedians, bareback riders...

CREW GUY #1
What's he doing here?

CREW GUY #2
He's probably doing something in connection with the show. Don't you remember a few years ago, there was some photographer, I can't remember his name. They called him the "Bad Boy of Shutterbugs." Snapped a picture of himself with a bullwhip shoved up his ass. Remember? Some famous museum displayed it. Sort of controversial at the time. Some lingerie company or underwear company got a hold of it and used it to promote their underwear. They used it on a billboard sign.

CREW GUY #1
Used it on a billboard? A guy with a bullwhip up his ass?

CREW GUY #2
Yeah, it's a classic photo. They called it a great artistic achievement. It broke new ground.

CREW GUY #1
What about it?

CREW GUY #2
Well, the league of decency came down on the underwear company pretty heavy. They said it was destroying morale. It went too far for the good of society.

CREW GUY #1
So what happened?

38 CONTINUED: (2) 38

CREW GUY #2
The ruling from the local judge came down on the side of the league of decency. The billboard came down, and the underwear company was given a stiff fine. Then Sweetheart got involved, took the case to the Supreme Court and got the decision overturned. That was a big day for Sweetheart.

CREW GUY #1
Seems like some days everything goes your way.

CREW GUY #2
Yeah, but in the end, people say he was never the same.

They pass Bobby Cupid, stringing the guitar as Tom Friend and Pagan Lace approach. She is mumbling her prayer. Tom Friend "shushes" her. She is distracted by the surroundings, like a child. Tom Friend is galvanized, energized by the hustle and bustle. He steps up to Bobby Cupid.

TOM FRIEND
I'm looking for Jack Fate. Is he in there?

BOBBY CUPID
Who's looking for him?

TOM FRIEND
Name's Tom Friend. I'm with the press. Who are you? What do you do?

BOBBY CUPID
I'm a mechanic.

TOM FRIEND
Well, I'm a journalist. And I've got an assignment to cover this so-called fundraiser. I'm looking for Jack Fate.

BOBBY CUPID
You ever read "For Whom the Bell Tolls"? Hemingway, now there's a guy who could write.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED: (3) 38

TOM FRIEND
Yeah, I read it. I need to see Jack Fate. You gonna make my job easy or difficult?

BOBBY CUPID
I don't know anything about any fundraiser.

TOM FRIEND
Get word to him that I was here. Can you do that? And I'll be back.

BOBBY CUPID
I don't know.

TOM FRIEND
Does a hundred dollar bill say anything to you?

BOBBY CUPID
Not a thing.

This is a moment of awkward tension. Pagan Lace, who has not even been paying attention, suddenly, abruptly chimes in with a completely new thought.

PAGAN LACE
Tom, let's get something to eat. You know a good place to eat around here?

BOBBY CUPID
You might try Caesar's Palace outside of town.

PAGAN LACE
What do they have to eat there?

BOBBY CUPID
I don't know. They got Indian cornbread, boiled in water and bacon fat. That's supposed to be pretty good.

Bobby Cupid exits. He and Tom Friend stare each other down as Bobby Cupid walks away warily.

CUT TO:

39 INT. JACK'S DRESSING ROOM TRAILER - CONTINUOUS 39

Uncle Sweetheart and Jack Fate speak. Uncle Sweetheart looks over the contract.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
They want you to sing that song "Revolution." You know, the Beatles song. They might even want you to sing it twice.

JACK FATE
Yeah, yeah, okay, "Revolution." What else is on their playlist?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I got their list right here...
(pulls out a sheet of paper)
Where's my glasses? Let's see here...Okay, here goes..."Street Fightin' Man"..."Won't Get Fooled Again"... "Cellblock #9"..."Ohio"..."Eve of Destruction"..."Kick out the Jams." You can do all those.

JACK FATE
I don't know, Uncle. Sounds like a lot of songs.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Look son, you blew it before. This is your big chance. I'm trying to get your career back on track. There's people out there giving prizes to people like you.

JACK FATE
Prizes.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
People are impressed by people who win things. Don't you know.

JACK FATE
You must be kidding, right?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Look son, I'm on your side.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: 39

JACK FATE
You wanna be on my side, Uncle, you gotta be born on my side.

Bobby Cupid re-enters with the guitar.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Ah, behold the dreamer cometh. What's going on, dreamer?

BOBBY CUPID
There's some guy here snoopin' around.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Looking for me? What does he look like?

BOBBY CUPID
What'd he look like? Got his hair tied back in a ponytail. He's with some weird half-breed chick. He looks like a leech, if you ask me. Some kind of two-faced monster. A spy. Lee would've probably had him shot. Sherman would've hung him.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Oh, that's a good attitude. You can tell all that just by looking at somebody?

BOBBY CUPID
Well, a guy does all kinds of things to give himself away.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Maybe we should talk to him. We could use some publicity. Who does he want to talk to?

BOBBY CUPID
He wants to talk to Jack.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Maybe you should talk to him, Jack. Exposure can't hurt.

JACK FATE
Talking to any of those guys is a waste of time.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (2) 39

BOBBY CUPID
Well, his pen is sweatin' blood if you ask me.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Well, nobody's asking you... Look Jack, I'm doing my best. Gimme a break. I'm only human.

JACK FATE
I know. It ain't easy being human.

Jack Fate exits, he walks past Nina, who talks to the two crew guys.

NINA
What's the matter? We're behind schedule.

CREW GUY
We got a problem here. Too much electrical load. The voltage at the output terminals they're undergoing a decrease.

NINA
What about the generator?

CREW GUY
I need a current distribution center, where the voltage doesn't fall so badly.

NINA
Well, look, the frequencies are merely superimposed upon one another. We have to be able to modulate by some kind of ring modulator. Can we do this? Can we start on time?

CREW GUY
We're doin' our best.

Nina exits as Tom Friend spots Jack Fate. Jack Fate sees Tom Friend but ignores him. Tom Friend rushes up to him.

TOM FRIEND
Jack. Tom Friend. I'm with the press.

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (3) 39

JACK FATE
(on guard)
I know who you are and I know who you're with.

TOM FRIEND
Yeah. Long time.

Jack doesn't acknowledge this.

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?

JACK FATE
I don't know. Depends what you want to know.

TOM FRIEND
What do I wanna know? I wanna know a lot of things.

JACK FATE
Like what?

TOM FRIEND
(takes out a pencil)
I know you had a twin brother. Whatever happened to him?

JACK FATE
(surprised)
He went on a hunting trip. Is that all?

TOM FRIEND
Yeah, well Jack, that doesn't explain anything.

JACK FATE
Yeah, well, he didn't come back.

Jack moves on as Uncle Sweetheart charges in followed by Bobby Cupid.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Wait a minute. We're all free people, aren't we? Let's be free. Let's act free. Son, you're free now. Act free. To be free is to act rational.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (4) 39

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
It won't hurt you to answer a few questions.

BOBBY CUPID
Nobody has to answer any questions.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
This will do us a lot of good. Let's just tell keep it simple. Tell him what he wants to know.

JACK FATE
All right. What else does he want to know?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Can we keep it short?

TOM FRIEND
Yeah, we can keep it short. Okay, Jack I got a few more things here. Mothers of Invention, Jack. Zappa, remember him? Now there's a guy who wouldn't take no for an answer. Did a whole movie, "Uncle Meat," sixteen hours long, totally unedited. He let it all hang out, didn't he? What about you, Jack? Have you ever let it all hang out?

JACK FATE
It's always hanging out.

Jack begins moving again; followed by this unlikely entourage.

JACK FATE
What else you want to know?

TOM FRIEND
Oh yeah, okay. Twin brother took a hunting trip, huh? You know that singer in the group the Bee Gees?

JACK FATE
What about him?

TOM FRIEND
Sounds a lot like Gene Pitney, doesn't he, Jack?

39 CONTINUED: (5) 39

JACK FATE
Okay.

TOM FRIEND
Yeah, "Town Without Pity," Jack. Remember that? Place where they lock you up for something you haven't even thought about doing yet. Pretty lonesome world, ain't it Jack?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Hey listen this is supposed to be about a charity fundraiser, here.

TOM FRIEND
Yeah, I know. I'm almost done.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
All right, let's wrap it up.

TOM FRIEND
What about Hendrix, Jack? You remember Hendrix at Woodstock? I'm just curious, you weren't there were you? Why? Where were you? You weren't up there with Hendrix. You should've seen Hendrix. He was all business. Didn't mix business with pleasure. Playing "Star Spangled Banner" through two lousy speakers to half a million people in the mud. What a cry that was. A cry forlorn. One last gasp of the old regime. One desperate cry for freedom, up there with that screaming guitar. What was he saying, Jack? He was saying, "I know what I look like. I know I couldn't get a break in America. I went to England and found some blokes and formed my own band." What was that "Star Spangled Banner" trip all about, Jack? Revolution, I don't think so. You could hear the tears in every note he played. Saying love me, love me, I'm not a traitor, I'm a native son. He took the glorious anthem and he dropped drug bombs on it. You could hear that cry around the world, Jack. He was saying I'm an American citizen.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

39 CONTINUED: (6) 39

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
He was crying out to his forefathers. The pilgrims who came to this country didn't need no stinkin' passports, didn't need to talk to any government officials. Hendrix, Jack, the last man standing. Pride and honor, Jack. That's what it's all about, but nobody heard him. One sad cry of pity, Jack. A town without pity. What about you, what do you think about that? Would you reach out to a drowning man. Would you think when you were doing it that he might pull you in?

Everyone stops.

BOBBY CUPID
(pulls out his knife)
This guy's way out of line.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Does anybody want a drink? Why don't we have a drink? I want a drink.

There is a long awkward pause. Jack shakes his head in disbelief and begins to exit. As he does, he crosses past Pagan Lace. They exchange a glance. Jack throws his cigarette butt on the ground and exits. She picks it up and smokes it.

BOBBY CUPID
(dismissive, to Uncle Sweetheart)
You're a nuisance and an annoyance.

Bobby Cupid catches up with Jack. Tom Friend yanks the cigarette out of Pagan Lace's mouth, throws it down, grabs her and exits in the opposite direction. Alone, Uncle Sweetheart takes a swig of his drink. He chases after Tom.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Hey wait a minute, maybe we can still work this out--

Uncle Sweetheart passes the two crew guys, who've been observing.

39 CONTINUED: (7) 39

CREW GUY #1
(to second crew guy)
When I was in welding school, just for kicks, we would heat a steel bar until it was red hot, let the color cool out of it, and then ask the new boy to bring over the metal bar. All it would cost him is the skin off his hand.

They resume their work.

CUT TO:

40 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - MORNING - CONTINUOUS 40

Uncle Sweetheart catches up with Tom Friend and Pagan Lace.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
We can work this out.

TOM FRIEND
I got my story. We're not working nothing out.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
That was all off the record, you know.

TOM FRIEND
Nothing's off the record.

Tom Friend walks away but Pagan Lace stops. Uncle Sweetheart is curious. He approaches her.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Here, have a drink. Become part of the club. Sample a mouthful... Become a member in full standing.

She examines the bottle. Smells it.

PAGAN LACE
I don't drink scotch.

She smiles then catches up with Tom.

40 CONTINUED: 40

UNCLE SWEETHEART
(shouting after them)
Oh, I get it. You're one of them hot corn girls. You got a lot of self control. Freedom is only for people who can practice self control, right? That's what you're thinking, right? I know what you're thinking.

He takes a swig from his flask.

CUT TO:

41 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT 41

Everything is quiet. Nina sits alone listening to the preacher's religious fervor on the radio in her trailer, masturbating. We start on her face and pull away as the preacher talks, through the window and outside the trailer, past crew people who have no idea what she's doing alone in there.

PREACHER (V.O.)
We're living in the world with the god of Cain and Abel. The concept of good and evil, some people have trouble with that. You have to have a clear consciousness of what constitutes good and evil. There's a whole lot of people who have trouble with the concept of evil. They like to think it doesn't exist. We're living in the world of Cain and Abel. There's people who break laws and encourage others to break laws. There's a lot of social evils that can be eliminated by murder, like David in the Bible, the King Arthur of the Jews. Faith, hope and charity. The greatest of these is charity. Sometimes we act as if nothing will ever get done in life unless we do it ourselves. We fail to see god's mighty plan. We fail to see the good things coming our way that take no effort on our part. Life is full of risks and sometimes, people, we must take the risks to live by the spiritual path.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED: 41

PREACHER (cont'd)
Life is like a salad dressing, folks, and we must shake it up or else it becomes stagnant before we know it...

42 INT. SOUNDSTAGE 42

Finally Jack enters the stage, we follow him. The band awaits him. He picks up a guitar and they begin playing "Standing In The Doorway."

LYRICS

I'm walking through the summer nights

Jukebox playing low

Yesterday everything was going too fast

Today, it's moving too slow

I got no place left to turn

I got nothing left to burn

Don't know if I saw you, if I would kiss you or kill you

It probably wouldn't matter to you anyhow

You left me standing in the doorway, crying

I got nothing to go back to now

The light in this place is so bad

Making me sick in the head

All the laughter is just making me sad

The stars have turned cherry red

I'm strumming on my gay guitar

Smoking a cheap cigar

The ghost of our old love has not gone away

Don't look like it will anytime soon

42 CONTINUED: 42

You left me standing in the doorway crying
Under the midnight moon
Maybe they'll get me and maybe they won't
But not tonight and it won't be here
There are things I could say but I don't
I know the mercy of God must be near
I've been riding the midnight train
Got ice water in my veins
I would be crazy if I took you back
It would go up against every rule
You left me standing in the doorway, crying
Suffering like a fool
When the last rays of daylight go down
Buddy, you'll roll no more
I can hear the church bells ringing in the yard
I wonder who they're ringing for
I know I can't win
But my heart just won't give in
Last night I danced with a stranger
But she just reminded me you were the one
You left me standing in the doorway crying
In the dark land of the sun
I'll eat when I'm hungry, drink when I'm dry
And live my life on the square
And even if the flesh falls off my face

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED: (2) 42

I know someone will be there to care

It always means so much

Even the softest touch

I see nothing to be gained by any explanation

There are no words that need to be said

You left me standing in the doorway crying

Blues wrapped around my head

43 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS 43

Jack Fate puts the guitar down and exits past the ventriloquist. The Dummy speaks to the Ventriloquist.

DUMMY
I like that song. It shows you can triumph over the malice of others, the forces of envy. It's not just some tragic reenactment of the past. Songs aren't meant to be original or say something that's never been said. He puts forth the common sense of the subject. I like what it says about life. Life is not something you can rewind or fast forward. We can't control the timing of the universe. We better get used to it.

VENTRILOQUIST
That's easy for you to say.

CUT TO:

44 INT. PRESIDENTIAL MANSION - NIGHT 44

Inside the bedroom, the President lies close to death. At his bedside are pictures of his family from long ago, particularly affectionate pictures from long ago of him and the young Jack Fate. But none of those people are present in the room. Instead, the 'impersonal' assistants from the previous scene and a caretaker sit with him. He shrieks in pain and fear and delusion. He is calmed down and medicated as we

CUT TO:

45 INT. HOTEL ROOM 45

Pagan Lace lights candles at her newly erected altar and performs her obsessive, compulsive ritual. Outside, we see mobs are gathering and losing control in front of a building protected by the 'police'. We watch Tom Friend struggle through the crowd, into the hotel. Then Tom Friend enters the room. Dishevelled from his experience downstairs Pagan Lace doesn't notice he has come in until she has completed her ritual.

PAGAN LACE
Where have you been?

TOM FRIEND
They bumped off another taxi driver.

He crosses to the window.

PAGAN LACE
What's going on out there?

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
Down there in that stinking courtyard, that jail. They're trying to bust out a political prisoner. Either that or they're trying to bust in and take the damn child molester out and hang him from the lamp post. Hell, I don't know.

PAGAN LACE
You're rattled, Tom. What's bugging you?

TOM FRIEND
What's bugging me? The absurdity of a lifetime of futile labor. That's what's bugging me. Condemned to some pointless task. I'm trying to track down some guy and ask him the meaning of life...Look at that crowd down there. Life itself is the meaning of life.

She joins him at the window.

PAGAN LACE
Your problem is you're looking at the bug on your windshield, Tom.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED: 45

PAGAN LACE (cont'd)
If you keep looking at it you're gonna miss the scenery and have an accident. You gotta look through the windshield not at it.

Tom is shocked, he looks at her.

TOM FRIEND
(incredulous)
What's that?... Why don't you go off somewhere? Why don't you find a nice beach bum, gigolo, or stud.

She laughs, refusing to take him seriously.

PAGAN LACE
Tom--

TOM FRIEND
(half to himself)
...It's a dictatorship and it's getting worse by the day...Newspapers are all a false map of the world. You ever heard of the AIDS epidemic?

PAGAN LACE
Yeah.

TOM FRIEND
What if I told you it was cooked up by some Mau-Mau men in Africa and they gave it to British sailors. How about the Vietnam War, you ever heard of that one? What if I told you it was lost in the whorehouses of Saigon instead of on the battlefield.

PAGAN LACE
How do you know that stuff?

TOM FRIEND
You never reveal your sources.

PAGAN LACE
Be careful, Tom. The light in your brain will go off.

45 CONTINUED: (2) 45

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
I never thought I had a brain until now.

CUT TO:

46 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT 46

Uncle Sweetheart is standing by himself, singing. He's holding a sheaf of papers. He's drinking from his flask.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
(singing)
Who's that a-coming, John the Revelator.

Percy and Blunt appear.

PERCY
Hey, Sweetheart.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Ah, the two scavengers. Somebody must have left some scraps of food lying around.

Long pause as Percy and Blunt size up their options. Uncle Sweetheart is unafraid. Finally:

PERCY
Your bones break easy, you know.

They exit.

CUT TO:

47 INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS 47

Tom Friend is high. Pagan Lace tries to clean him up, picking stuff off his jacket, wiping his sweaty face, etc.

TOM FRIEND
Stop asking me stuff.

PAGAN LACE
But I need to know so I can understand things.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: 47

TOM FRIEND
What do you need to understand?

She tries to clean some blood off his hands. She scrubs furiously.

PAGAN LACE
Everybody's got something in their past, Tom. Why don't you tell me what's hiding back there.

He takes a deep breath. She puts down the now bloody cloth.

PAGAN LACE (cont'd)
(softly)
Tell me.

He takes another deep breath. A swig of whisky.

PAGAN LACE (cont'd)
Go ahead.

TOM FRIEND
(another deep breath)
I grew up on a farm. I slept with the cows. My old man broke his leg, became addicted to drugs, then he became a missionary. We had nothing against rats, but we used to have to shoot them because they'd eat the potatoes and flour. If rats were like frogs and ate water and mud, we would have left them alone. Then we lived in a mobile home park. We lived in a Prowler next to the Holiday Rambler and the Nomad. I had a baby horse. It meant everything to me. I wouldn't have traded it for a racehorse. The saddle was so small you could've put it on a cat. My old man, he went down the tunnel of love, the dark ride. It was the only way he could go. At carnival time, everybody had to put on a mask, and you had to eat and drink through your mask. Somebody brought me what I thought was eggs and home fries, and I gobbled it down. Then somebody told me later I'd eaten the flesh of my old man.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: (2) 47

PAGAN LACE
Fuck.

She returns to the altar and begins praying. Tom Friend weeps silently. We move to a radio on the night table.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
The President hasn't been seen in weeks. Some fear the worst. Spokesman for the ailing leader said quote, he is wearing the harness of necessity, unquote...

CUT TO:

48 EXT. SOUNDSTAGE - MORNING 48

The armed man is standing guard at the gate. A passerby stops -- an old, Picasso-like man.

OLD MAN
What's going on in there?

ARMED MAN
I'm not at liberty to say.

OLD MAN
How do you get into this club?

ARMED MAN
You go by night, to a certain fountain, find the girl who'll be there and rape her. Then you become one of the big boys. You're an easy mark. Then you're in the club. You're the front man. You've taken the path of least resistance. They put you at the head of the gang. Now you're in the inner ring of the inner ring. That's how it works.

The old man considers this, then walks away.

CUT TO:

49 INT. NINA'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS. 49

Jack Fate sits strumming on Blind Lemon's guitar with Uncle Sweetheart, who fans himself.

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: 49

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Ooh, it's hot in here. The air conditioner must be on the blink.

Nina enters waving a piece of paper.

NINA
These are the lyrics to "Jailhouse Rock." This is a song that the executives are insisting be played.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
"Jailhouse Rock?" Why do they want to hear that?

NINA
Just look at the lyrics, Sweetheart. Like, "the warden threw a party in a county jail." They see it as a song of hope. Some kind of egalitarian thing. They want to plant seeds of hope.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Lots of people have tried to plant seeds of hope.

NINA
Yeah, but seeds don't grow if you plant them on a carpet or a hardwood floor. You got to put them in the earth, where they come in contact with the soil.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
What do you think, Jack? "Jailhouse Rock?"

Jake Fate rises and addresses Uncle Sweetheart.

JACK FATE
Yeah, well, uh, do you know what cellulose is, Uncle?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Cellulose?

49 CONTINUED: (2) 49

JACK FATE (cont'd)
Yeah, cellulose. It's in the grass. A cow can digest it, but you can't...I can't either.

Jack exits.

NINA
(exasperated)
What's this all about? You know that reporter who was here yesterday? Why didn't anybody talk to him?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I thought somebody did talk to him.

NINA
No, there wasn't any story anywhere and we need the publicity. The network is demanding it.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You're winding yourself up too tight.

NINA
Don't play dumb with me. You're smarter than that, Sweetheart. You're hiding your light under a bushel.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Well, maybe I am, but it's no big deal.

NINA
You have no passion for this. You have no feeling.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Passions and feelings are a curse that the gods strike you with. It's very hard to make them compatible with living.

NINA
Gods, what do you know about gods? These network heads are the gods. They work their will with no blood in their bodies. They don't know the future, nor do they answer questions.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

49 CONTINUED: (3) 49

NINA (cont'd)
They play on our dream states like a concertina.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I've seen 'em.

NINA
Yeah?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
They're not gods, they're nothing but preachers and lawyers and hired agents and professional speakers. They all have vested interests and we can discount whatever they say.

Both Nina and Uncle Sweetheart are angry.

NINA
Maybe you can, Sweetheart, but not me. I have to work with them. I have to eat.

She exits. Uncle Sweetheart follows.

50 EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS 50

We follow him out onto the street where ahead of him Jack Fate walks along. Bobby Cupid follows. Uncle Sweetheart comes running after them. In the background we see Nina Veronica look on alarmed, then run back inside.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Hey! Wait a second, Jack!

They turn around.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
I screwed up. I screwed up big time.

BOBBY CUPID
That's one thing about you, Sweetheart. You don't do nothing small time.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Shut up, I'm not talking to you.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
A couple of guys are chasing me down. I made 'em some promises.

50 CONTINUED: 50

JACK FATE
Promises are hard to fulfill.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I had to borrow money, Jack. I did a stupid thing. I borrowed money to buy something that's been decreasing in value ever since I owned it. Ain't that a bitch.

JACK FATE
Yeah, well, you live and learn, don't you.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Don't you understand? I'm trying to get free of my mistakes... I've got a family, Jack. I'm not going to become a burden to my children. Don't leave, Jack. You know I'm not some vicious person in a position of wealth and power.

JACK FATE
No. You're like a chemist who invents a new drug and doesn't care about the side effects.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I'm in over my head.

BOBBY CUPID
You're nothing but a piker, a door to door encyclopedia salesman. You'd commit treason against your own self.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Who's talking to you?

BOBBY CUPID
Common sense, that's who. William Faulkner, that's who. "Absalom, Absalom". Every word of "The Fall of the House of Usher", is rolling around my head. The voices inside my head. That's who. Screw this so-called concert, Jack. These cats are just addicted to lights and sound. Let's go someplace where we can see the earth and sky.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED: (2) 50

BOBBY CUPID (cont'd)
Let's go to the South Seas. Let's go to where Gauguin went and disappear for awhile. Someplace where we can relax and not be nervous around these people, these wretches of humanity. This guy here, he's like a praying mantis. He doesn't kill his victims. He just paralyzes them, feeds off them. He don't kill nothing. He's too smart for that.

Uncle Sweetheart grabs him by the collar, pulling him close.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
(softly)
I don't know which one of those voices is coming out of your mouth, but tell it to shut the fuck up.

He releases him.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Gauguin was a stockbroker.

He stands there, as they walk away.

JACK FATE
(to Bobby Cupid)
I got to borrow your car for awhile.

BOBBY CUPID
Yeah, it's over here.

They reach a beat up old jalopy.

BOBBY CUPID (cont'd)
You gonna need any help?

JACK FATE
Just let me have the keys.

Bobby Cupid has a big ring of keys. He hands Jack Fate the key. Jack gets in and starts it up. He drives away, leaving Bobby Cupid and Uncle Sweetheart alone on the dusty road. They exchange an awkward glance then turn and head back together.

CUT TO:

51 EXT. ROAD - NIGHT 51

The car's been wrecked. It's in a ditch. The hood is up, it's smoking. We pan past the car and find Jack Fate as he crosses a cemetery. Finally, he stops in front of a modest marker. It reads: MARY, BELOVED MOTHER OF JACK 1942- AND EDWARD 1945-1946. Beside this grave a new unmarked hole is dug.

CUT TO:

52 FLASHBACK #5 - APPROXIMATELY 1968 52

This is a camera planted, hidden, probably in the closet of a hotel room. The son, now 27, is waiting in the hotel room. A bottle of whisky sits prominently in the otherwise antiseptic environment. The son walks up to the camera and acknowledges it. He is a party to the deception. He is culpable. The father's beautiful mistress enters. She knows nothing of the camera. She is plied with drink, and quickly she and the son become amorous

JACK FATE (V.O.)
The last thing I would've ever wanted to do would be to disrupt the authority of my father. I wouldn't have done that for anything. I guess you could say I was under the spell of my mother. And my mother, she had a few, little problems. Little problems can get blown out of proportion in a big way. Sometimes people have more than they need, and more than they deserve. Because you can only do a little bit, you do nothing. And I didn't want to be like that. Some of us pursue perfection and virtue, and if we're lucky we catch up to it, but happiness can't be pursued. It either comes to you or it don't. You can always say, if only this, or if only that, but "if only" is a state of mind that we get into when we feel deprived. In the end, it's the strongest arm that stretches the bow.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT 53

We recognize it as the house from the earlier flashback.

CUT TO:

54 INT. HOUSE - NIGHT 54

A warm glow from a fire lights the house. Old "Jack Fate" music wafts through the room. There is a knock at the door. The beautiful mistress from the flashback, now slightly older, enters and crosses to answer it and is not surprised to find Jack Fate at her threshold.

DISSOLVE TO:

55 INT. HOUSE - LATER 55

Jack Fate and the MISTRESS sit together. She treats his cut.

MISTRESS
I wondered if you would ever return. I wondered if I'd ever see you again. You were pretty beaten and banged up that night.

JACK FATE
That was a bad night.

MISTRESS
You never resolved it with him, did you?

JACK FATE
Too many loose ends.

MISTRESS
You're gonna try to straighten it out with him? You think you can?

JACK FATE
It can't be straightened out. It'll never be. Not by me, anyway.

MISTRESS
Then what are you coming back for, Jack? He's on his death bed.

(CONTINUED)

55 CONTINUED: 55

JACK FATE
I gotta see him. I'm tired of not seeing him.

MISTRESS
You gave it all away, didn't you? You gave all the best of you away.

JACK FATE
Yeah, I did. I gave it to them all. All them sons of bitches who are either unwilling or unable to accept it.

MISTRESS
Yeah we all did... I heard you tried to kill yourself. I heard you took the car that night, drained the brake fluid out of it, took some Valium and went for a ride.

JACK FATE
I'm still here, ain't I?

A pause.

MISTRESS (cont'd)
...Your father was a good man.

JACK FATE
Sure he was. He caused senseless death, endless tears, needless loss, but sure, if you wanna say he was a good man, he was a good man.

MISTRESS
Your mama, Jack. You wouldn't have had nothing to do with me if it wasn't for her... If you wanna go see him, you better go now. I hope it's not too late.

JACK FATE
It's late, and it's always been late.

MISTRESS
Don't forget. A home is a refuge, Jack. A relaxing place for the heart and mind. You can come here anytime.
(MORE)

55 CONTINUED: (2) 55

MISTRESS (cont'd)
What can I do for you? I wanna do something for you. What can I do?

JACK FATE
Go get the keys to the boathouse. Row me out onto the lake. I wanna see the sun rise.

DISSOLVE TO:

56 EXT. PRESIDENTIAL MANSION-DAWN. 56

Jack Fate walks up to the heavily armed guard gate. He is stopped by numerous soldiers who train their weapons on him. One guard steps forward and shines a light on his face. Jack's cut is completely healed. They seem to recognize him.

CUT TO:

57 INT. PRESIDENTIAL MANSION - HALLWAY - DAY 57

Jack Fate walks down the hallway accompanied by EDMUND.

EDMUND
Long time, Jack.

JACK FATE
Yeah, it's been awhile. So much happens, don't it, in such a short time?

EDMUND
Seems like only yesterday.

JACK FATE
Maybe to you.

EDMUND
We used to play together out there, in the back. While my mother cleaned this house, my father took care of the grounds. We were illegal back then. We're not illegal anymore. We're in charge now, Jack.

JACK FATE
Yeah, I remember your ma. She was a wonderful lady. Asked permission before she did anything.

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: 57

EDMUND
Yeah, before she'd pluck a leaf off a tree, she'd ask permission.

JACK FATE
Couldn't wash away the real dirt, though.

EDMUND
Nah, nobody could.

They walk along.

EDMUND (cont'd)
I'm the man your father wanted you to be. I'm the next President of this country.

JACK FATE
Yeah, that's something, isn't it.

EDMUND
You know how it is, Jack. When inferior people want to revolt, they do. And when they become equal, they want to be superior. You're looking at the top man now, Jack. It's no dog and pony show. We're not just some macho men from the flea market.

JACK FATE
You got any new kind of manifesto?

EDMUND
Yes, I do, as a matter of fact. I have my speech already prepared.

He walks through the onlookers that sit vigil, camped out around the stage where the Presidents death bed is perched behind the curtain. They barely react to Edmund's speech..

EDMUND (cont'd)
Ladies and gentleman. People of the republic. We are now a nation of laws. The laws of common sense, which from now forthcoming will overrule all other laws.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: (2) 57

EDMUND (cont'd)
As far as rights go, all people aren't entitled to the same rights. Freedom is only for people who can practice self control. Let me say we no longer have any cause to fear danger from abroad. Our strength and power is well known throughout the civilized world. It is from within amongst ourselves, from cupidity, corruption, disappointed ambition, and inordinate thirst for power that factions will be formed and liberty endangered. It is against such designs that we especially have to guard ourselves. Whatever disguises the actors may assume, we have the highest of human trust committed to our care. We are not Nazis. We do not believe in racial superiority, because here there is no racial unity, because here we have all races and creeds. There will be no more violence in the organized media. Real actual violence will take the place of manufactured violence. We have the good of society at heart. We will bring back public displays of games. We are going to empty the prisons. We will fill the football stadiums. We will have evil-doers from the prisons trampled by wild elephants, mauled by uncaged bears, pecked to death by screaming eagles. And finally, there will be great satisfaction for the people, who have struggled so bravely and fought so fiercely for their much cherished independence...

He breathes heavily. We hear thunder and see flashes of lightening. A storm erupts. Jack moves past him and enters his father's quarters. Jack sits by the bed of his dying father, the President. They are silent. Although it is silent, it is a silence of lament, of melancholy, an elegiac silence. A silence beyond any words. Silence is the only appropriate response. There are too many words unspoken to start now. Too many promises broken. Finally, Jack takes the President's hand and he closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

58 FLASHBACK #6 - APPROXIMATELY 1968 58

Inside the hotel room. The son and the mistress, together. Before long, the door is kicked in and looming in the doorway is the father and his goons. The son is caught inflagrante delicto. The father grabs the son, as the goons look on and cover him. The father drags the son out of the room. The camera comes cautiously out of the closet, in time to witness the son being thrown unceremoniously down the stairs by the father, as the goons and the horrified woman look on. The goons suddenly become aware of the camera's presence and quickly catch the cameraman and beat him, and as the camera falls, that is the end of the transmission. Until now...

JACK FATE (V.O.)
...If I know nothing else, I know at least one thing is true: that the sacred is in the ordinary, the common things in life. They tell you that everything is nonsense, that the laws of nature are nonsense, gravity is nonsense, relationships don't exist, jobs don't exist. Everything is up for grabs and there's no cause of anything. That's what they'd like you to believe. I guess you could say I was pushed downhill, but my fall from grace didn't end at the bottom of those stairs. It went on, and it seemed to go on forever. All of life is a balancing act, and we make choices between extremes. Conformity or freedom. Acceptance or doubt. Humility or raging ego. We have to make choices. People mistake fact for opinion. The easiest enemy to overcome is an opinionated one. Expect the worst, and you'll get it. That's about all he ever taught me. In jail, there are a lot of guilty guys who are innocent. Outside, there are a lot of innocent guys that are guilty... All of us in some way are trying to kill time. When it's all said and done, time ends up killing us.

CUT TO:

59 INT. PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM 59

Jack kisses his father on the head. His father opens his eyes for a moment, a brief moment, perhaps of recognition, acknowledgement then closes them again. Jack exits.

CUT TO:

60. INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 60

Nina crosses to her trailer as Uncle Sweetheart chases after her.

NINA
I'm pulling the plug. I can't wait anymore. It's over.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Wait a little longer. What harm will it do to wait? He'll show up, I said he'd show up.

Bobby Cupid joins this parade.

BOBBY CUPID
Let her pull the plug. What the hell's the difference, anyway.

Tom Friend walks up to the group.

TOM FRIEND
What's going on here? Are you cancelling the concert? Do I get the exclusive? You made promises, Sweetheart. Big promises.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I did? Well, I don't remember. I got amnesia. Get the fuck out of my face, ink slinger.

They lunge at each other. Bobby Cupid and a couple of crew guys try to break it up. Suddenly, surprisingly, Jack Fate enters like nothing happened. He's been up all night. He's wet from the rain. They see him and let go of each other. There is an awkward silence. Then:

60 CONTINUED: 60

BOBBY CUPID
(to Jack Fate)
Hey, I got one for you.
You know the difference between a stupid person and a pizza? One is easy to cheat and the other is cheesy to eat.

There is silence again, then: Jack and Bobby Cupid laugh. They walk off together.

CUT TO:

61 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 61

MONTAGE: Hard working crew, putting the pieces together. We see people building, sawing, hammering, pulling cables, lifting, we see Nina Veronica, Uncle Sweetheart, and Bobby Cupid.

CUT TO:

62 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 62

Jack Fate and the band rehearsing "Drifters Escape", and this is the soundtrack of the montage.

LYRICS
"Oh, help me in my weakness,"

I heard the drifter say,

As they carried him from the courtroom

And were taking him away.

"My trip hasn't been a pleasant one

And my time it isn't long,

And I still do not know

What it was that I've done wrong."

Well, the judge, he cast his robe aside,

A tear came to his eye,

"You fail to understand," he said,

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: 62

"Why must you even try?"

Outside, the crowd was stirring,

You could hear it from the door.

Inside, the judge was stepping down,

While the jury cried for more.

"Oh, stop that cursed jury,"

Cried the attendant and the nurse,

"The trial was bad enough;

But this is ten times worse."

CUT TO:

63 INT. SOUNDSTAGE 63

Pagan Lace, off by herself, talks to no one in particular.

PAGAN LACE
I love his songs 'cause they're not precise. They're emotionally ambiguous. Nobody else will do that. They invite different interpretations.

She exits, as Uncle Sweetheart approaches Jack with a MOTHER and her SEVEN YEAR OLD CHILD. The child seems sweet, but is holding a toy gun. The mother wears a cast on her arm.

MOTHER
(to Jack Fate)
It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Fate.

JACK FATE
(to Uncle Sweetheart)
Who's this?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
This is Mrs. Brown, and she's got a lovely daughter.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: 63

MRS. BROWN
My daughter has memorized all of your songs.

JACK FATE
Is that so? Why'd she do that?

MRS. BROWN
'Cause I made her, that's why.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
What do you think of that, Jack? Used to be she'd be sweating away in some factory, underage. Now we got child labor laws. All these kids, we took 'em out of the factories, put 'em in the streets. How 'bout that? Anyway, she wants to sing for you. She wants to sing her little heart out. Let her sing. Go ahead, darling.

The mother nods to the child, and the child begins to sing, "The Times, They are A Changin'."

LYRICS

Come gather 'round people

Wherever you roam

And admit that the waters

Around you have grown

And accept it that soon

You'll be drenched to the bone.

If your time to you

Is worth savin'

Then you better start swimmin'

Or you'll sink like a stone

For the times they are a-changin'.

Come writers and critics

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (2) 63

Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'.
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'.
Come senators, congressmen
Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway
Don't block up the hall
For he that gets hurt
Will be he who has stalled
There's a battle outside
And it is ragin'.
It'll soon shake your windows
And rattle your walls
For the times they are a-changin'
Come mothers and fathers
Throughout the land
And don't criticize
What you can't understand

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (3) 63

Your sons and your daughters

Are beyond your command

Your old road is

Rapidly agin'

Please get out of the new one

If you can't lend your hand

For the times they are a-changin'.

The line it is drawn

The curse it is cast

The slow one now

Will later be fast

As the present now

Will later be past

The order is

Rapidly fadin'.

And the first one now

Will later be last

For the times they are a-changin'.

JACK FATE
Gotta get this girl into school.

Jack Fate takes a quarter out of his pocket, and proceeds to make the quarter disappear and then reappear behind the child's ear. Mrs. Brown and her daughter exit in one direction, Jack Fate and Uncle Sweetheart in the other. Mrs. Brown and her daughter cross Tom Friend and Pagan Lace as they pass the FORTUNE TELLER. Tom Friend stops.

TOM FRIEND
You're one of them fortune tellers, eh? One of them gypsies.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (4) 63

FORTUNE TELLER
I can tell you anything. What would you like to know?

TOM FRIEND
Gypsies. Isn't that short for Egyptian? You people built the pyramids. What happened to you? I've been to Egypt. Those people now look like they couldn't build any pyramids. Must be a different kind of Egyptian.

FORTUNE TELLER
You're so knowing. Why don't you show me your hand?

Pagan seems frightened.

PAGAN LACE
Tom, we should keep moving.

TOM FRIEND
(ignoring her)
Here's my hand. Take a peek.

She starts reading his palm. Pagan Lace closes her eyes and begins praying. She takes out some prayer beads.

FORTUNE TELLER
I see here you have a genius for dealing with people...You're a man of many talents, but they're not being used...

TOM FRIEND
Tell me more.

FORTUNE TELLER
...Your laziness stands in front of you and the life you've dreamed of. You're living in a nation that's dying a slow death. Look at the faces on your money. Slave owners and Indian fighters. They'll soon be replaced by the faces of strangers. Look at your sacred monuments and your tombs of heroes. They're being desecrated and upturned. Everything your nation has stood for.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (5) 63

FORTUNE TELLER (cont'd)
Every commitment, every truth, every ideal, everything of beauty, all these things are being stripped away. You are living in a world where all the jewels, diamonds, pearls, and rubies have been replaced by queer replicas. I see a lot of anger here, and you scoff at things you don't understand.

Tom scoffs, looks at Pagan. She is immersed in prayer.

FORTUNE TELLER
And you, young lady. Lemme see that hand.

At first, Pagan doesn't respond. Then, she snaps out of her reverie.

PAGAN LACE
Yeah, me? What about me?

The fortune teller takes Pagan's hand. Pagan gasps. Her beads break and go flying everywhere.

FORTUNE TELLER
You have feelings you don't understand, that's because in one of your past lives, you were the daughter of a pope. You were hidden from the world. That's why in this life you feel like you've been trampled over. And it's true. You are being trampled over. Don't you feel like you're being trampled over?
(pointing to a line on her palm)
See this here? Someone you trust could get you in trouble this week...

The fortune teller lets go of Pagan Lace, who tries to retrieve the scattered beads. The fortune teller then turns to Tom Friend.

FORTUNE TELLER (cont'd)
You son, you're about to enter a new and serious realm... The world of the unknown.

TOM FRIEND
Go on.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (6) 63

FORTUNE TELLER
Your place of existence is temporal. I see that you write things down. This is a good sign.

TOM FRIEND
(sotto)
I'm the voice of the people. Ha-ha.

FORTUNE TELLER
There are a few things you should be concerned about. Things could take an upward turn, but you will first have to give up your high-tech lifestyle.

TOM FRIEND
(hands her money)
Yeah, my high-tech lifestyle. Okay, here. I've heard enough. Is there anymore?

FORTUNE TELLER
I see by this line here that you're still looking for something that you've already found. A temptation tugs at your roots, but it's a trap. See this line here? Someone is praying that you'll escape this trap...

She looks into Tom's eyes and speaks with greater emphasis.

FORTUNE TELLER (cont'd)
Victory comes from avoiding it altogether or running swiftly from it.

Tom is struck by this ominous line.

PAGAN
(as she finishes gathering her beads)
Tom, that's enough. Let's go.

FORTUNE TELLER
Beware of the majority. You must be skeptical of the majority, the brave and the good were never in the majority. I see by this line that you are a strong-willed individual.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (7) 63

FORTUNE TELLER (cont'd)
Literature is your voice. And literature my friend is the voice that outlives the body. Yes, you are the voice of the people. You have an inquisitive mind, a mind that demands justice. I see by this line here that you're at a crossroads. You're a writer who writes the same sentence over and over again.

He pulls his hand away.

TOM FRIEND
Let's get the hell out of here.

Tom storms away. Before Pagan can exit, the fortune teller grabs her hand. The fortune teller's mouth doesn't move, but Pagan hears the following.

FORTUNE TELLER (V.O.)
I see a dark haired individual who looms large in your future... Beware of Val Xavier and his snakeskin jacket.

Pagan pulls her hand away and exits. Someone else comes along and sits down with the fortune teller. We hear the storm outside.

CUT TO:

64 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS 64

We angle on Nina in her cubicle. She sits at her desk, feet up. She's on the phone, listening to the radio at the same time.

NINA
Thank you, I'll pass that advice along to him.

She slams down the phone. In a distressed state, she listens to the following.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Geologists in Trenton are digging the world's deepest hole and have reached a depth of thirty miles. Something went amiss when the drill bit began to rotate wildly out of control.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED: 64

RADIO ANNOUNCER (cont'd)
Geologists measured the temperature down there as up to 3,000 degrees. They have lowered microphones into the pit and heard the sounds of millions of suffering souls. Dr. Samosa, at the project management center, has determined that the center of the earth is hollow. "Hopefully," he says, "whatever is down there will stay down there." Work has ground to a halt. And many of the scientists have feared for their lives. In the west, rain is expected, and heavy snowfall is moving in from the plains...

Nina picks up the phone and dials, but gets only a busy signal. We hear the storm.

CUT TO:

65 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS 65

We follow Jack Fate and Bobby Cupid past the holy janitor, who is sweeping. He spots Jack Fate and approaches them. The janitor hands Jack a flyer that reads: **Do you believe in aliens? Crop circles? Graffiti in the wheat fields? Are you concerned with lasers and fiber optics in the UFO tapestry? If you are ready to break with the traditional political process, and are concerned with the future of freedom and liberty come to this address.**

66 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - CONTINUOUS 66

Jack pockets the flyer and steps on stage, joining the waiting musicians. He launches into "Tryin' To Get To Heaven" on his guitar.

Lyrics

The air is getting hotter

There's a rumbling in the skies

I've been wading through the high muddy water

With the heat rising in my eyes

Every day your memory grows dimmer

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: 66

It doesn't haunt me like it did before
I've been walking through the middle of nowhere
Trying to get to heaven before they close the door
When I was in Missouri
They would not let me be
I had to leave there in a hurry
I only saw what they let me see
You broke a heart that loved you
Now you can seal up the book and not write anymore
I've been walking that lonesome valley
Trying to get to heaven before they close the door
People on the platforms
Waiting for the trains
I can hear their hearts a-beatin'
Like pendulums swinging on chains
When you think that you lost everything
You find out you can always lose a little more
I'm just going down the road feeling bad
Trying to get to heaven before they close the door
I'm going down the river
Down to New Orleans
They tell me everything is gonna be all right
But I don't know what "all right" means
I was riding in a buggy with Miss Mary-Jane
Miss Mary-Jane got a house in Baltimore

(CONTINUED)

66 CONTINUED: (2) 66

I been all around the world, boys

Now I'm trying to get to heaven before they close the door

Gonna sleep down in the parlor

And relive my dreams

I'll close my eyes and I wonder

If everything is as hollow as it seems

Some trains don't pull no gamblers

No midnight ramblers, like they did before

I been to Sugar Town, I shook the sugar down

Now I'm trying to get to heaven before they close the door

CUT TO:

67 INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY 67

Bobby Cupid sits with Uncle Sweetheart. Bobby Cupid tries to play the chords on the guitar, while Uncle Sweetheart continues reviewing the voluminous sheaf of papers from his bursting briefcase.

BOBBY CUPID
Man, I didn't think he played that song anymore. Those chords are so unorthodox. That E diminished to F Sharp Minor. The way it descends. It doesn't even make musical sense, but by the way he positions that harmony line and changes the beat within the structure, it's like a concerto. And that doesn't even take into account the use of the words. The counterpart is always switching places with the melody line, especially when the beat switches from three to two to go with the lyric. I don't know how the hell he does that, concentrate on two things at the same time.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED: 67

BOBBY CUPID (cont'd)
Old Jack, he was always a hundred years ahead of his time.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
I don't know what you're talking about. If a song works it works. Alexander the Great was a hundred years ahead of his time, too.

BOBBY CUPID
Who?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Alexander the Great. The cat who conquered all of Persia, Africa and Egypt. A lot of people don't know about him, but he was a great singer, too. His mother -- and he had a hell of a mother -- says to him, "Is that all you're gonna do with your life? Just sing songs to the girls? You could be out there doing a lot more, son. You could be conquering this god forsaken world." You know what he got up and did?

BOBBY CUPID
(goofing on Uncle Sweetheart)
Who?

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
(exasperated)
Alexander the Great. That's who I'm talking about. He went out and raised an army, cooked all his enemies in crank case oil, rounded up all the wise citizens and doused them in canned heat, wiped his mouth, looked around, went home, went to bed, and died. Left every nation he plundered and conquered for his armies to divide. Sure, he could've stayed home and strummed on his guitar, but you never would have heard of him. He never would have been Alexander the Great.

BOBBY CUPID
Well, I don't know. But I don't think he had songs like these...

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED: (2) 67

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Yeah, but what I'm saying is that you don't change the world just by singing.

BOBBY CUPID
Okay, I'll keep it in mind.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You got any idea what that song's about?

BOBBY CUPID
Yeah, it's about trying to get to heaven. You got to know the route before you start out.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
No, it's not about that at all. What strikes you about the song is the Jekyll and Hyde quality. That's what you like. It's written from Hyde's point of view. It's just like you. That's why it rings so true. Because the whole thing is about doing evil and killing your conscience if you can. It's not like those other songs of his. Those other ones about faithless women, booze, brothels, and the cruelty of society. This one's not like those. This one's right up your alley. It's about doing good by trying to manipulate the forces of evil. Isn't that why you like it? Isn't that what you trying to do? Admit it. That's what draws you to the song. Robert Louis Stevenson, it's everything he was saying and more. It's all in that song. That's why you like it. Admit it.

BOBBY CUPID
Yeah, okay. If you say so.

They return to their activities.

CUT TO:

68 INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY 68

Jack Fate washes his hands, looks at himself in the mirror. Tom Friend enters the bathroom.

TOM FRIEND
What have I been doing? Pissing and missing the bowl?

Jack faces him.

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
You're avoiding me, but you don't need to avoid me. I owe you an apology. I just want to know a few things. Who's getting the money from this concert? Who's pockets is it lining? How much are they paying you to trot around the ring? I wanna know what pipe of power you're smoking from. Remember Janis Joplin, Jack, the Judy Garland of rock and roll? She took it all the way, didn't she? Lord, all she wanted was a Mercedes Benz. I know you knew her, Jack. You like people who fall on their knees and fawn all over you. I don't do that, that's why you don't like me, isn't it? That's why you don't want to answer any questions.

JACK FATE
I never really thought about that.

TOM FRIEND
Exactly. What about your rejected thoughts? Give me a few pieces of the puzzle. Tell me about the king of the sexual revolutionaries. Hefner, that son of the Bible-thumping Baptist. You know who I'm talking about. How does he figure into this? What about that guy, Jack? The guy's slept with 3,000 women. What the fuck for? He's only got three or four kids. He should have a thousand kids. He should be king of the world. What's the point, Jack? What was he sleeping with all those women for? What went wrong. Tell me. You're supposed to have all the answers.
(MORE)

68 CONTINUED: 68

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
Sexuality is more revolutionary than any ideology, and you know it. You think good and bad are irrelevant? Tell me why. I wanna know what the hell makes you tick... And where are you going from here?

JACK FATE
If I knew I'd be glad to tell you.

TOM FRIEND
That's a pat answer. Here's an easy one. Who's your true companion, Jack? Who makes your life easier? Can you at least answer that?

Jack turns to leave.

TOM FRIEND (cont'd)
Look, man, I'm on your side. I wanna put your story on the front page of the London Times. You need the publicity and you know it. You know the London Times, Jack? You been in England lately? It ain't so English anymore. You wouldn't recognize the place. Big Ben is still there, so's the Tower of London, but it's just a theme park. The English are in the minority in their own country, Jack. Imagine that. They didn't keep their birth rate up. Just a lot of the elderly. What Hitler and Napoleon couldn't do has been done in a bloodless coup. Churchill wouldn't know the place, his beloved country. You got your start there, Jack. How does that make you feel? The empire is finished. What do you think about all that? That's what I want to know... Look, man. I'm on your side.

JACK FATE
Don't worry about it.

TOM FRIEND
I don't want to be here anymore than you do.

JACK FATE
I doubt it.

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED: (2) 68

Jack Fate exits, leaving Tom Friend alone.

CUT TO:

69 INT. LONG, LABYRINTHINE CORRIDOR 69

Jack Fate steps out of the bathroom door and into a dark, shadowy, labyrinth. He tries to find his way back to the stage. As he does, he passes the following things:

A. A BLIND MAN; looks like Father Time or Plato.

BLIND MAN
You don't know me, but I've heard of you. We have a lot in common. Pity me. I murdered my father in a scuffle, stabbed him in the neck. I married my mother in a lavish ceremony attended by hundreds. I put out my own eyes. I was forewarned that I would do this, and by golly, I did. All of the pieces of my life are not in good shape, but some things are in perfect order. It disgusted me when I had my fortune read and I was forewarned of what I was about to do. It was the last thing I ever thought would happen. I ran as far as I could to get away. I even ran to another country and I thought I was safe. I never thought it would happen to me, killing my father and marrying my mother. I wanted to turn and run and disappear. But to hear Dr. Freud tell it, I had it all planned out from the beginning. I'd strangle him if I could. He slandered me. He never met me. He made it all up. Dr. Freud, he wrote about me from cocaine hell. Cocaine, that's the only thing he knew anything about. His patients paid him in it. Cocoa leaf, the curse of the Incas, gift of the gods, the divine leaf of immortality. He knew it well. Thought it gave him more vitality and an increase in self control. He sang its praises. Psychotherapy, that great science, with no fixed laws. An entire industry based on cocaine fantasies and hallucinations.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: 69

BLIND MAN (cont'd)
Think about it. He started it all. German agents dealt it to the British troops who went crazy on it. 90% of all dollar bills show traces of it. Monkeys pass up food and sex for it. It's the amazing elixir of life. Dr. Freud, he got it from his dentist, his dealer, gave it to him as an anaesthetic. Dr. Freud thought most of our diseases are caused by brain exhaustion. Long before it was fashionable, he was snorting it around the clock. He rewrote my life's history and turned it into a nightmare of childish, sexual fantasy from everyday life. I've become a symbol of sexual perversion. Yes, indeed, pity me. They don't call it the Freudian sniff for nothing. Dr. Freud, he had nasal sores and bleeding, died a slow painful death. He should've been writing about his own life, left mine alone. Say what you want about me, I didn't need any mood elevators to get to the top floor. But I understand his struggle. The ride of life is never smooth. Life is putting up a lot of iron. You take it down and you haul it over the road and you set it up again. It's grueling and it takes a little something to make it easier. I just wish he would've written about somebody else. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to my guests.

He walks off into the darkness, and we hear a horrific crash.

B. A MAN on the run. He stops in front of Jack Fate. They seem to recognize each other.

MAN ON THE RUN
They're filming a TV show back there. You watch TV for any considerable length of time, you think that everybody's either rich or that he's about to die a horrible death.

The man takes off again.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (2) 69

C. He walks past a doorway with a sign on it. The sign shows a giant chicken chasing a small man. It reads: "man-eating chicken." He opens the door to reveal an average man sitting at a table eating from a bucket of fried chicken. He seems surprised by the intrusion. Jack closes the door and moves on.

D. The magician approaches Jack Fate and performs a trick for him (e.g. - He pulls a flower from inside his jacket.)

E. Jack Fate finally winds up in a darkened, empty soundstage, except for a solitary man, dressed in old-fashioned clothes and carrying a banjo. His face has been disfigured, but otherwise he looks like a dandy gone to seed. Is he real or ethereal? His name is OSCAR VOGEL.

JACK FATE
Excuse me, I got myself all turned around. Where's the stage?

OSCAR VOGEL
No. You're in the right place.

JACK FATE
You look familiar. Do I know you?

OSCAR VOGEL
Yes, you do. My name is Oscar Vogel.

JACK FATE
Oscar Vogel.

OSCAR VOGEL
Do you remember? It was many years ago. I was the star of the show here. One of the biggest stars. Your father would bring you when you were a child. I'd put you on the show. You'd play your guitar. Sing a song. When I heard you were doing a show here, I thought you might return the favor. Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks.

JACK FATE
I don't know if there's room for anybody on the show. You should talk to this guy named Uncle Sweetheart.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (3) 69

OSCAR VOGEL
Yes, I remember him, too. He put shows on in the past here. I was one of your father's favorite performers once. Everything was going great as long as you kept your mouth shut. But your father was doing things that were wrong. His desire for retaliation and revenge was too strong, which caused a lot of injustice, lies and bad things. I was the only one in any position to say anything. Everyone else was too scared. I had the show. I had a forum. So, I spoke out. It's not what goes in the mouth, it's what comes out that counts. They said it was an accident. Some even said it was a suicide. Some people choose to die in all kinds of ways. Some jump out of buildings and slit their wrists on the way down. Some fall on their own sword. I opened my mouth... That's the way it goes.

JACK FATE
How do I get to the stage?

OSCAR VOGEL
The stage. Ah, yes, the stage. The whole world's a stage.

Jack Fate walks past Oscar Vogel into the darkness. We hear the sounds of the storm.

DISSOLVE TO:

70 INT. PRESIDENTIAL MANSION -DAY 70

Outside the President's "bedroom," his staff from high ranking loyalists to household help stand vigil, awaiting the inevitable end. From inside the bedroom, we hear weeping. Then, the curtain is parted. We see the President, covered with his sheets. Edmund emerges from the room. Some, amongst the gathered, burst into tears.

EDMUND
The President is dead.

Some mutter "long live the President" in response.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED: 70

EDMUND (cont'd)
Thank you. The President was a strong and brave man who's principles and beliefs never wavered, and which we must continue to strictly adhere to and carry out, in accordance with his last wishes. As you know, we have captured the cultural institutions of this country. The institutions that shape the souls of the young. The schools, the colleges, the movies, music, and the arts. They all belong to us now. At the moment, we are giving people a new identity, and erasing the collective memory. We are rewriting the history books. Nothing was more important to our President than bringing peace to this war torn country. Peace, a lasting peace, can only be achieved through strength. So, in my first act as the new President, as the leader of the new government, this new regime, we will begin to deploy troops immediately to the southern regions, we will resume the bombing in the jungle. We will begin executing and enslaving prisoners, and that includes those who have preached diversity but who have never practiced it, and those who decried intolerance but were the least tolerant of all. We shall deal with them in a harsh manner. Remember this, life is a chess game, where all the pieces are the same color. Your self-discipline shall be watched and judged. Furthermore, we will alert the rebel leaders that the negotiations have ended. There will be no more compromises. No more concessions. Only complete and utter and unequivocal surrender. We have learned a valuable lesson. Great nations do not fight small wars. We have seen the difference between winners and losers. Those who are victorious, win first then go to war, while the defeated go to war first and then seek to win.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED: (2) 70

EDMUND (cont'd)
There will be no more stupidity. No more mistakes. It is a new day. God help you all.

He begins to march down the hall, attended to by his new staff while his security force begins clearing the room of mourners. We hear the storm raging.

CUT TO:

NEWS FOOTAGE: Same as the opening montage. Political unrest and violence, natural disasters, etc. Change is occurring whether we want it or not.

71 EXT. STREET 71

We see the homeless man in the rain, leaning up against the wall with his broken boom box. We hear the sound of Edmund's speech emanating from it.

CUT TO:

72 INT. SOUNDSTAGE 72

MONTAGE (MOS) To the opening strains of "Cold Irons Bound"

1. Director and technicians in the booth, ready for broadcast, but the monitors show nothing but static and they can't fix it.

2. Nina Veronica enters urgently, sees the broadcast transmission difficulties and gets on the phone to Lucius and his flunkies. There is no answer.

3. Uncle Sweetheart, alone in the dressing room, drinking heavily.

3a. Tom Friend and Pagan Lace outside the SOUNDSTAGE, immersed in a horrible, physical argument in the rain.

4. Bobby Cupid asleep in a remote, dark corner of the SOUNDSTAGE. He hears the opening riff of the song, awakens, and steps onto the stage where all the workers and others dance and gyrate and genuflect to this Swamp Boogie Tent revival show.

CUT TO:

73 INT. SOUNDSTAGE 73

Jack and the band playing "Cold Irons Bound."

Lyrics

I'm beginning to hear voices and there's no one around
Well, I'm all used up and the fields have turned brown
I went to church on Sunday and she passed by
My love for her is taking such a long time to die
I'm waist deep, waist deep in the mist
It's almost like, almost like I don't exist
I'm twenty miles out of town, in cold irons bound
The walls of pride are high and wide
Can't see over to the other side
It's such a sad thing to see beauty decay
It's sadder still, to feel your heart torn away
One look at you and I'm out of control
Like the universe has swallowed me whole
I'm twenty miles out of town in cold irons bound
There's too many people, too many to recall
I thought some of 'm were friends of mine; I was wrong about 'm all
Well, the road is rocky and the hillside's mud
Up over my head nothing but clouds of blood
I found my world, found my world in you
But your love just hasn't proved true
I'm twenty miles out of town in cold irons bound
Twenty miles out of town in cold irons bound

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED: 73

Oh, the winds in Chicago have torn me to shreds
Reality has always had too many heads
Some things last longer that you think they will
There are some kind of things you can never kill
It's you and you only, I'm been thinking about
But you can't see in and it's hard lookin' out
I'm twenty miles out of town in cold irons bound
Well the fats in the fire and the water's in the tank
The whiskey's in the jar and the money's in the bank
I tried to love and protect you because I cared
I'm gonna remember forever the joy that we shared
Looking at you and I'm on my bended knee
You have no idea what you do to me
I'm twenty miles out of town in cold irons bound
Twenty miles out of town in cold irons bound

As Jack repeats the last line again and again, we

CUT TO:

74 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DAY 74

As the army bursts in, breaking up the show, taking prisoners, harassing and injuring innocent people. A small group of soldiers burst into the booth and take a struggling Nina Veronica into custody. The plug is pulled. In the midst of the madness:

VENTRILOQUIST'S DUMMY
That song makes so much psychological sense. It doesn't pander or talk down to anyone. And it's got a great melody.

(CONTINUED)

74 CONTINUED: 74

VENTRILOQUIST
I'm sorry, what?

FADE OUT.

75 INT. SOUNDSTAGE - LATER - DAY 75

As people pick through the rubble trying to make sense of the senseless violence, an inebriated Uncle Sweetheart is hitting on Pagan Lace, who is picking up shards and relics like collecting shells on the beach. She is not listening to Uncle Sweetheart.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
We're living in a tawdry and vulgar age. What do you think?

PAGAN LACE
(distracted by her task)
Yes, we are.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You know when the Roman empire fell? You know what Caesar and the rest of them Romans were doing when the barbarians were at the gates?

PAGAN LACE
What?

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Shooting craps and gambling.

PAGAN LACE
Gambling's a waste of time and energy.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
If you wanna build a casino, you gotta build it like a fortress in case there's a police raid.

PAGAN LACE
I suppose.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Can I offer you a drink? Wanna be sociable?

PAGAN LACE
I don't drink.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: 75

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
One little sip of nectar.

PAGAN LACE
I said I don't drink.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Come on, you're not on duty.

PAGAN LACE
I told you before, no.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Come on, you can get to the truth of things. Discover the riches of a wise and good life.

PAGAN LACE
Thanks, I'll stay as I am.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Don't you want to live forever? Put some liquor in your blood.

Uncle Sweetheart tries to force the drink on her. She resists mightily. A minor struggle ensues. Tom Friend enters. He is clearly medicated.

TOM FRIEND
She don't want a drink.

Uncle Sweetheart and Pagan Lace uncouple.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Oh, look who's here. The sultan of sleaze. The thing that came from outer space. Where'd you come from, the world's fair? We're having a conversation here.

TOM FRIEND
You've had your day and there's no more conversation.

PAGAN LACE
It's okay.

75 CONTINUED: (2) 75

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Look, I was selling porn magazines out of the trunk of my car before you were born. Don't tell me I've had my day.

TOM FRIEND
It is your day. Now, drag your swollen self out of here. Get away from her.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
You're the scum of all scum. You should never have been born, you pickled punk.

With that, Tom Friend slowly and methodically takes a chair and smashes Uncle Sweetheart. He grabs Uncle Sweetheart's collar and starts to strangle him. Pagan grabs Tom Friend and starts to scream.

PAGAN LACE
Tom, don't, don't.

TOM FRIEND
No, I'm gonna win you a prize.

PAGAN LACE
Tom--

TOM FRIEND
(choking Uncle Sweetheart)
I just hit the lotto jackpot. Won the booby prize. A dead dog.

In the midst of this tense scene, Jack Fate wanders past with his old guitar. He is clearly leaving. Although he'd rather not, he can't help but see what's transpiring. We see him at this crossroads. He starts to leave again, but can't. He stops, considers his options. He knows he has none. Reluctantly,but inevitably, he approaches the conflict. He steps up to Tom Friend and pushes him back.

JACK FATE
He's done nothing to you.

Tom Friend and Uncle Sweetheart stop struggling as Tom Friend turns to Jack Fate.

75 CONTINUED: (3) 75

TOM FRIEND
(incredulous)
You're gonna try to protect him? You're gonna try to kill me? That sack of shit? That wooden-faced moron? I wouldn't spit on him. Him and his mucky, lying tongue. He screwed you over just like everybody else.

Jack Fate and Tom Friend grapple. Jack Fate pushes an uneasy Tom Friend, who trips over a chair and falls. Jack Fate breaks a bottle, holds it to Tom Friend's throat. He's got his foot on his chest. He suddenly backs off. Tom Friend, as he gets up, pulls out a pistol. He aims first at Sweetheart, then at Fate, but hesitates. He hears the words of the fortune teller: *Someone is praying that you'll escape this trap. Victory comes from avoiding it altogether or running swiftly from it....* Just then, in Tom Friend's moment of doubt and hesitation Bobby Cupid comes out of nowhere with Blind Lemon's guitar and smashes Tom Friend repeatedly until Tom Friend falls, and all that's left of the guitar is the neck. Bobby Cupid then plunges the jagged edge of the neck into Tom Friend, as the others look on, sprayed and splattered with Tom Friend's blood. Pagan Lace screams by the fallen, dying body of Tom Friend. She lies on top of him and weeps.

PAGAN
Tom! Don't leave me! Don't leave me!

TOM FRIEND
(faint whisper)
Once when I was passing a cathedral, a white dove came flying by and dropped a twig it was carrying in its beak at my feet. Poetry, painting and music. It's funny. I never thought about those things until now.

He dies. Pagan Lace looks up. She hears -- nothing. She smiles and hugs Tom Friend's lifeless body. We hear the sound of sirens in the distance. The two crew guys approach and kneel down to check Tom's pulse.

CREW GUY #1
This guy's gone. Somebody better call the meat wagon.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (4) 75

JACK FATE
(to Bobby Cupid)
You better get out of here. Go out the back way.

BOBBY CUPID
You coming, too?

JACK FATE
I'm staying here.

He hands Bobby Cupid his own guitar. Bobby takes it, they exchange a glance, and Bobby is off. Uncle Sweetheart is distraught. Jack comforts him.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
Ah, man. I didn't realize it would come down like this.

JACK FATE
How would you know?

The soldiers enter holding Nina at gunpoint.

POLICEMAN #2
All right? Everybody stay where you are. Anybody see anything?

There is silence. They prod Nina with their rifles.

NINA
I saw it. I saw it all. I was right there. He did it.

She points at Jack Fate.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
What?!

Pagan Lace looks up, confused, but doesn't say anything.

JACK FATE
That's okay.

NINA
Yeah, he did it. I was there. I saw it all. He's responsible. It might have been a random act, but you know what? You can put his whole life on trial.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (5) 75

They put the cuffs on Jack and lead him away. Nina is freed. She exchanges a glance with Jack Fate and exits. Uncle Sweetheart kneels down next to Pagan Lace and begins to rifle through Tom Friend's pockets. He finds money and valuables, but then decides not to keep them. He throws them back down on the body and sighs.

UNCLE SWEETHEART
There's so much love, light, beauty, humor and happiness in the world. Everything is always right there, but you can't see it. Sometimes, after awhile there's no nothing. It all comes down to that.

Pagan Lace takes pity on Uncle Sweetheart. She takes his bottle from him and in an act of compassion, connection, and even liberation takes a drink. PERCY and BLUNT appear. Uncle Sweetheart sees them.

UNCLE SWEETHEART (cont'd)
Ah, yeah.

PERCY
For everything in life you do, Sweetheart, there's a price. You pay it up front, in the beginning, or you pay it at the back-end.

They lead him away. We can hear the sirens and commotion outside. The two crew guys gather their tools.

CREW GUY #1
Bugles of madness.

CREW GUY #2
What'd you say?

CREW GUY #1
Nothing. I didn't say nothing. I didn't see nothing. I don't know nothing.

CREW GUY #2
Yeah, well. That's a good way to be. It's better to know nothing than to think you know something that isn't so.

75 CONTINUED: (6) 75

They exit.

CUT TO:

76 EXT. SOUNDSTAGE FACILITY - DAY 76

As the doors open and bright sunlight floods in we follow Jack Fate into the police car and the police car as it drives away.

CUT TO:

77 EXT./INT. POLICE CAR -DAY 77

As it drives away, it gets caught in a massive traffic jam. Up ahead, we see why. It's a state funeral for Jack's father, the President. The slow procession marches down the boulevard. In back, Jack Fate observes the funeral procession as it passes. Finally, there is a break in the funeral procession and the police car drives through. We hear the preacher on the radio.

RADIO PREACHER (V.O.)
God has turned his back on this nation...The same god that creates the diseases and the plagues, also creates the medicines and the cures...Gods, being invulnerable, they cannot have nobility. They do not know self-sacrifice...God does not suffer...He doesn't feel pain...He is not a courageous God...Human beings can be courageous or cowardly. Neither of these make up any of god's nature. The gods don't determine outcome. They control passions. That's how they get people to do their bidding...Man has the mind of God, but the body of dust...All of humankind is a slave race and was meant to be from the beginning...Will man destroy the earth to move on? Is that his destiny? We'll wait to find out...What nourishes gods? The smell of fear. The gods get fat on fear...These gods left before the Bible was written.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED: 77

RADIO PREACHER (cont'd)
Man was left on his own and yet that is not the end of it. Ask yourselves a question, people. Are you humble before god?

PULL OUT, as the police car drives away, past the funeral procession.

JACK FATE (V.O.)
...I was always a singer and maybe no more than that. Sometimes it's not enough to know the meaning of things. Sometimes we have to know what things don't mean as well. Like, what does it mean to not know what the person you love is capable of? Things fall apart, especially all the neat order of rules and laws. The way we look at the world is the way we really are. See it from a fair garden, everything looks cheerful. Climb to a higher mountain, and you see plunder and murder. Truth and beauty are in the eye of the beholder. I stopped trying to figure everything out a long time ago.

MUSIC: "Cold Irons Bound" (reprise)

FADE OUT.

THE END